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AT THE FEET OF THE DIVINE MASTER

Short Meditations for Busy Parish Priests

BY

THE REV. ANTHONY HUONDER, S.J.

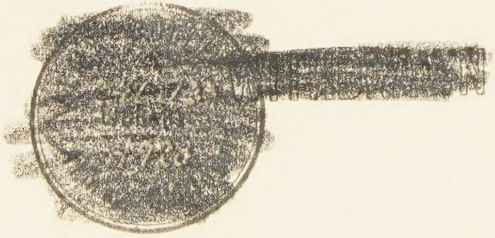
THIRD SERIES

THE MORNING OF GLORIFICATION

FREELY ADAPTED INTO ENGLISH

by

AUGUST F. BROCKLAND



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THE MORNING OF GLORIFICATION

INTRODUCTORY MEDITATION

I. LONGING FOR JOY

The priest who sits day by day at the feet of the Divine Master and meditates on His marvelous life and labors, learns to love Him more and more, and as a result is prepared to bear with the Master the burden and heat of the working day, and even, if need be, to follow Him into the dark night of suffering.

However, this willingness to labor and to suffer veils the confident expectation, consciously or unconsciously entertained, that this day of toil and this night of suffering will not last forever, that they will be followed by a cheerful evening of relaxation, a blissful morning of glorification.

For we have not been created for suffering and sacrifice, but for joy. This certainty is rooted ineradicably in our innermost consciousness. Therefore, even the heart most eager for work longs for rest in the end—the most courageous fighter longs for ultimate peace, the most unselfish servant for an adequate reward.

II. THE URGE TO CONSUMMATION, TO COMPLETE POSSESSION

The soul aspires to rise from night to light, from the many fogs of uncertainty and doubt to a knowledge which is clear as sunlight. It feels an urge to escape from this miserable shell of the body with its awkwardness, its burdening fetters and common needs, into unfettered freedom of the mind; an urge once more to see those whom it knew and loved, and with whose fate its own was intimately interwoven; an urge towards other souls, to a free exchange of thought, without anxious reservations, to intercourse without annoying barriers, love without danger and aggravating intermingling of baser impulses—in short, the soul feels an urge to escape from this half-finished condition into fullness and perfection, from distance and exile into its true paternal home.

The love of longing is beautiful, but even more so is the possession of the object of love. The tabernacle, in which the God-Man is truly, really, and substantially present is beautiful; but incomparably more so is Heaven, where we shall see Him in all His beauty, without the sacramental veils.

Mary was marvelously great in her courageous suffering, but she was not allowed to remain the Mother of Sorrows; nay, the *"Regina Caeli"* must follow the *"Stabat Mater."* Magdalen is glorious in her fidelity, in her magnanimity; but her soul becomes anxious, her tears flow, her heart is full to bursting, and it is high time for her to hear at last the beatific greeting: "Mary!" Thus it is with all heroic souls. Unselfish love is indeed

the essence of their noble resignation, but hope, too, exerts its influence.

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FOLLOWING MEDITATIONS

This longing of the soul for joy, this hope for consummation and ultimate possession, find adequate consideration in the meditations on the Risen and Glorified Master. The forty days during which Jesus dwelt on earth are replete with a unique charm. They offer few, but extremely momentous mysteries. We see Christ alone, in intimate communion with His youthful Church; we see Him as the radiant conqueror, the glorified Lord, who offers us a foretaste of the *"Intra in gaudium Domini tui."* We see Him as the comforter, full of love and kindness, eagerly concerned with allowing His joy to overflow into the hearts of His followers, to raise them up, to compensate them for all they had suffered, to console them thoroughly and in the most loving manner. His appearance, His words, His deeds—everything is adapted to fill our hearts with sheer joy and firm confidence, to allow us to cast a glance into the glory of the morning of the transfiguration which awaits us if we follow the Master through the day of toil and the night of suffering.

I. THE MYSTERY OF THE RESURRECTION

I. THE NATURE OF THE RESURRECTION

1. New Life

Springtime each year brings the resurrection of nature. What was dead or frozen during winter awakes to new life; a new plant, a new flower, sprouts from the decaying seed. "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (Jno. xii, 24.)

But this revival of nature is not resurrection in its strict sense; it is merely a picture of resurrection, properly so called; for it is not the old leaves and blossoms that rise again; rather, new forms sprout from old seed, an old trunk, old roots. Resurrection proper is the restoration, the revivification of precisely what had gone down into death and the grave, what had turned to dust, the revival of what death had severed and destroyed. In the case of man, therefore, resurrection is the restoration of the dead, perhaps even decomposed body, and its reunion with the soul in a new communion of life. The phoenix arising from the ashes is a fitting symbol of this process.

Consequently, resurrection is not a new creation, which implies production from nothing, but rather the restoration of a being which previously existed, but was destroyed and dissolved by death. It is in very truth the reconstruction of the destroyed temple from essentially the same materials within the briefest possible time.

Thus one understands why the bodies of Christian believers are not burned, but lowered into the earth like a grain of seed.

II. An Act of Omnipotence

Resurrection signifies the perfect victory over that sovereign over all, death, a breach of the great, relentless law of nature concerning the death of all living organisms. It irrefutably demonstrates the intervention of a power transcending all the laws of nature. Although it is not a new creation, it is indeed the work of divine omnipotence. The raising of a dead body to life is the greatest of all miracles and can only be the work of God. "How could any thing endure, if Thou wouldst not? or be preserved, if not called by Thee?" (Wis. xi, 26).

III. Kinds of Resurrection

There is a resurrection to mortal life, as was that of Lazarus, and a resurrection to life eternal. The former implies the mere revivification of the deceased body for a temporary continuation of mortal life,

whereas the latter spells the transition to eternal life and at the same time a re-formation, if the person is one of the just. "We shall all indeed rise again, but we shall not all be changed." (1 Cor. xv, 51).

IV. Significance

The fact of the resurrection condemns and definitively refutes the naturalistic ideal of life, which finds its realization in a glorification of the flesh and mere worldly endeavor, as though there were no judgment, no eternity, no life beyond the grave. (Cfr. Wis. ii; Acts xxiii, 8). That was the Greek ideal of life, and therefore, St. Paul's sermon before the Areopagus was something utterly new to the philosophers.

The lives of millions in Christian countries correspond to such an ideal. It is the ideal of untold young men and youths at universities and colleges, in factories and shops, the fruit of a godless education; a life without God, without resurrection, just as it was once upon a time in Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome (cfr. Eph. ii; 1 Cor. vi, 9; Rom. vi).

II. THE FACT OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

We propose to consider not the accustomed proofs, but rather a more psychological motivation.

1. If Christ's resurrection is to be regarded as established, two facts must be certain: (1) His death and (2) His resurrection from the dead. For this reason both facts are always mentioned together in Holy Writ by

Christ and the Apostles (cfr. Matt. xvii, 22; xx, 19; Acts ii, 24; iii, 15; iv, 10).

To doubt the actual death of Christ did not even occur to His enemies; else they would, instead of requesting a guard for the tomb, have insisted upon an official inquiry, which would have been a simpler procedure.

2. At the moment of Christ's death on the cross nothing, from a purely natural point of view, was as weak and hopelessly doomed to ruin as His work, *i.e.*, the Church, of which He had laid the foundation. It numbered but a handful of followers, whose leaders had lost faith in their Master and wandered about aimlessly and helplessly.

What sort of men are these eleven Apostles who are to continue His work? They are poor, ignorant fishermen, without influence, and, in addition, utterly discouraged. They cannot call a solitary synagogue in the country their own; they have no standing among and no support from either the rulers or the people. They have no higher education and speak the crude Galilean dialect, which betrays their peasant birth.

Their stay, their inspiration, the force holding them together had been the Master. And He, condemned by the highest court, had died on the cross and lay, a corpse, in a tomb that was being safeguarded by the public authorities by means of an official seal and a guard. From the purely natural point of view all is lost, and their beautiful dream of the reëstablishment of the kingdom of Israel is definitively at an end.

Yet of a sudden these men, wholly changed, step

before the people and, indifferent to scourging and death, enthusiastically proclaim Christ as the Messias, the Saviour of the world.

What is it that has transformed them so suddenly from downcast, hopeless cowards into courageous heroes, confident of victory? It must have been something extremely great that brought about this change. Only one reply is possible: The Resurrection of the Lord, which they themselves designate as the cause. It is an event of elementary importance to see Him alive again whom they knew to be dead and buried. It was an experience that exerted a stronger influence than any other miracle.

"If Christ were not risen, we should be forced not only to explain how men came to believe in His resurrection without previous hope, but also how this faith was accepted with the firmness of personal conviction, which now clothed Christ with all attributes it had never before ascribed to Him; and this on the part of Jews brought up in the strictest monotheism." (Westcott, *Gospel of the Resurrection,* p. 112).

3. Without the fact of the Resurrection it is unthinkable:

a) that the Apostles themselves should have hit upon this idea, which was so foreign to them and which, even if it had taken hold of them on the strength of the Lord's own words, had been utterly routed from their minds by His Passion and death;

b) that they should have announced this fact to others and made it plausible to them;

c) that they should have built the whole of Christianity upon it;

d) that they should have replaced the Sabbath by the Sunday.

Without this fact and its elementary force they could never have thought of making the Resurrection the basis of their sermons on Christ, as St. Paul declares very incisively: "If Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain" (1 Cor. xv, 14).

If, on the contrary, this fact is considered established, everything finds a perfectly simple and natural explanation.

Add to this the consideration that Christ continues to live through the centuries as the greatest moral force that has ever influenced the human heart and the human will, and has inspired acts of heroism in comparison with which everything else dwindles into insignificance. He lives in the martyrs who die for Him; He lives in the Saints who despise and forsake all earthly things for His sake. He lives as the great motive and the driving force of all great persons and events in the history of Christianity—and all of this rests upon faith in the Resurrection!

III. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE RESURRECTION

I. On The Third Day

a) The Lord had predicted: "And they shall kill Him [the Son of man], and the third day He shall rise again"

(Matt. xvii, 22; cfr. xvi, 21; xx, 19; Mark viii, 31; ix, 30; x, 34; Luke ix, 22; xviii, 33; xxiv, 7).—"An evil and adulterous generation seeketh a sign; and a sign shall not be given it but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights, so the Son of man shall be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights" (Matt. xii, 39–40; cfr. xvi, 4; Luke xi, 20).—"Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up . . . But he spoke of the temple of His body" (John ii, 19–21; cfr. Matt. xxvi, 61; xxvii, 63; Mark xiv, 58). In this connection Jewish usage of not reckoning three days as a period of seventy-two hours, but of counting part of a day as a whole day should be kept in mind.

b) Thus the purpose of the Resurrection was served best, as the Angelic Doctor (*S. th.*, 3a qu. 53, art. 2) thoughtfully reasons. The chief purpose of the Resurrection was to strengthen men in the faith. In order to confirm belief in His divinity Christ had to rise soon and could not postpone His Resurrection until the day of judgment. Again, in order that the truth of His human nature and of His death be raised above even the slightest doubt, He must not rise too soon after His death, but must wait three days.

Since the Lord died about 3 o'clock on Friday afternoon, and rose on Sunday after the departure of darkness—"when it began to dawn towards the first day of the week" (Matt. xxviii, 1); "early the first day of the week" (Mark xvi, 9)—there lay between His death and Resurrection forty hours (Suarez), or three days, according to Jewish reckoning.

c) According to Pope St. Leo the Great, Jesus shortened the three days in the tomb and hastened His Resurrection in order to relieve the poor disciple of their sadness and confusion.

II. A Mysterious Event without Immediate Witnesses

a) Would it not have been better to make the Apostles immediate witnesses of the Resurrection? They were to be witnesses of the Resurrection, and the testimony of eye-witnesses is always the most dependable. And were they not also witnesses of the Ascension, and had they not, with their own eyes, seen the raising of Lazarus from the dead?

b) St. Thomas here points to the unique character of the Resurrection. It is an event wholly of the supernatural order. Now such supernatural facts are not proclaimed by God immediately to men, but by messengers from the supernatural world (angels). The Lord does not return to ordinary life, but after His Resurrection begins a glorified, transfigured life. Therefore, too, He does not remain constantly with His disciples, but comes and goes as suits His purposes. All of which shows that the Resurrection could not be the subject of a direct revelation.

To this must be added the circumstance that the disciples at the time were neither intellectually nor emotionally at all prepared for the reception of such a revelation. Even after they had been prepared for the

reappearance of the Lord, and when He returned without the radiance of His glorified triumph, they shuddered with fear and believed they were looking at a ghost. What if they had been eye-witnesses of the Resurrection! It was necessary to exclude even the slightest possibility of the disciples having called back to life a man who was only apparently dead, or having concealed his corpse; therefore, it was better that they remained away from the tomb.

c) The reference to the Ascension is not pertinent. The disciples were prepared for this event during forty days. It was the logical consequence of the Master's glorified life, of which the goal was Heaven. And although the Ascension was a miracle, it nevertheless came within the range of natural perception at its starting-point, and became a mystery only with the Master's triumphant entry into Heaven, which the disciples did not and could not see.

The raising of Lazarus from the dead was a return to ordinary mortal life. It was to prepare the disciples for Christ's own Resurrection. He who with one word could restore a decomposed corpse to life, could return to life Himself.

Notwithstanding all this, the Apostles were in fact witnesses of the Resurrection, since they once more saw the Lord, whom they knew to be dead, truly alive and showing all evidences of actual life.

The guards at the tomb also were witnesses of the phenomena accompanying the Resurrection and, therefore, of the Resurrection itself.

III. The Phenomena Accompanying the Resurrection

"And behold there was a great earthquake. For an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and coming, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it" (Matt. xxviii, 2). All the great acts of God signifying a proclamation to mankind, are accompanied by mighty phenomena of nature. The earthquake, according to Holy Writ, was a herald of God's presence. When Yahweh appeared as lawgiver on Mount Sinai, the earth trembled. When Christ died on Golgotha, the earth quaked as a sign of sorrow. When the Lord of death rose from the tomb, the foundations of the earth once more were shaken, and the earth opened as a sign that it would burst the fetters holding the Lord of life in the grave, and as a sign of His victory and triumph. Thus earth and the heavens rendered homage to their Lord and Master. Thus too the foundations of the earth will again tremble and the Angels of the Lord will reappear when the Lord shall come to sit in judgment. Thus, too, the heart of man should be made to tremble in reverence, pain, fear or joy when God's nearness proclaims itself. *Tactus Dei.*

IV. THE REASONS FOR THE RESURRECTION

Christ had to rise from the grave:

I. For God's Sake

The Resurrection was a postulate of divine justice, which must elevate those who humble themselves for

God's sake. *"Humiliavit semetipsum factus obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis. Propter quod et Deus exaltavit illum et donavit illi nomen, quod est super omne nomen"* (Phil. ii, 8 f. Cfr. St. Athan., *Orat. c. Arianos,* II).

In the dolorous Passion we see innocence oppressed and overcome, nay, apparently defeated. But we should like to know that in the end innocence is victorious. That was fulfilled in a magnificent fashion in the Resurrection. It is the triumph of good and shows that in the long run evil never retains the upper hand. *"Salus autem justorum a Domino: et protector eorum in tempore tribulationis"* (Ps. xxxvi, 39).

II. For His Own Sake

This glorification was due to Christ:

a) Because of the dignity of the Word made Man which had dwelt in this body. "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the sorrows of hell, as it was impossible that He should be holden by it" (Acts ii, 24). "Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell, nor wilt Thou give Thy Holy One to see corruption" (Ps. xv, 10). The appropriateness of all this is beautifully treated by St. Ambrose (*De Incarnationis Dominicae Sacramento,* c. 5).

b) Because of the hypostatic union of the two natures, by virtue of which transfiguration and life eternal were due to the body of Christ. He suffered death for the sake of our salvation, but eternal glory was His due for His own sake.

The sole reason for His not entering into this glory immediately upon His death was that He desired the truth of His death to be fully attested.

III. For Our Sake

a) Above all as a support and confirmation of our faith; therefore, the prediction repeatedly made by the Lord had to be fulfilled. He had declared emphatically: "No man taketh [My life] away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself; and I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again" (Jno. x, 18). He had repeatedly appealed to the Resurrection as proof of His divinity. Therefore St. Paul's declaration: *"Quod si Christus non resurrexit, vana est fides vestra"* (1 Cor. xv, 17) is absolutely true.

If Christ had not gloriously risen from the grave, the impression of His shameful crucifixion would have alone endured. That impression had to be wiped out and neutralized by the Resurrection. The latter showed forth the Lord's divinity with overwhelming power and, therefore, the Apostles appeal to it in their sermons. No other miracle made so deep an impression upon the Apostles. It was so extraordinary that at first they would not believe it. Their joy was all the greater when they were confronted with the fact and freed from every doubt.

b) The Resurrection was necessary to confirm our hope and trust in our own resurrection. If the head rises from the dead, the members will follow. Jesus was the *"primogenitus ex mortuis"* (Col. i, 18). What

would have become of the small, scattered flock of the young Church if He Himself had not brought the Easter greeting and Easter joy of the Resurrection? His reappearance was like sunrise after a long, fearsome night.

V. THE GLORY OF THE RESURRECTION

I. Christ's Victory Over Death

a) Hades, the realm of the dead, is the symbol of the power of death, to which up to then no one with absolute dominion had effectively offered resistance. Now Christ descends, shatters the portals of the nether world, and announces salvation and freedom to the prisoners. He then bursts the fetters binding His own body and goes forth in glory from the night of the grave into the living light. This departure from Hades constitutes the introduction to the reign of Christ over those that are in Heaven, on earth, and under the earth (Phil. ii, 10).

b) Death indeed continues to play its part, but its power, its terror, is broken by Christ, "who hath destroyed death and hath brought to light life and incorruption" (2 Tim. i, 10). We Christians need fear death no longer. The soul redeemed by Christ no longer descends into the nether world, or if it does, it is only for a short time, and even the body, converted to dust, will rise again. (Cfr. 1 Cor. xv, 20–26).

c) Christ is like unto a conqueror who has broken down the gates and walls of a strong fortress and lib-

erated all the prisoners. "Fear not, I am the First and the Last and alive, and was dead, and behold I am living for ever and ever, and have the keys of death and of hell" (Apoc. i, 18).

II. Christ's Victory Over His Enemies

a) Christ's enemies believed they stood under the cross as conquerors and gloated over the sufferings and torments of the dying Saviour. True, they feared Him even on the cross. Hatred is always mingled with terror and the fear that the victim may escape. On this bloody figure rested such calm and dignity, such a glow of higher power! Naught can disturb Him, He endures everything with incomparable patience, He awards crowns of eternal life even on the cross! But now His lips are closed, His eye is glassy, His heart has ceased to beat. His body is, indeed, spared further indignities, but it is swallowed by the tomb; and the official seal and the guard protect it from violation. *"Io triumphe!"*

b) But how great was to be their disappointment, how keenly were they to feel their impotence! In their malice they tried to frustrate the plans of God, but instead they had to promote them, as did the sons of Jacob when they sold their brother Joseph into Egypt. Precisely the detailed solicitude which the enemies extend to the grave directs attention to it and causes the Resurrection to become the talk of the city. Christ's enemies become witnesses of the truth against their will.

c) And how their plans dwindle into nothingness, nay, are converted to serve a contrary purpose!

The place of disgrace and suffering, Golgotha, to which they dragged Him, and the tomb which they sealed, become the most glorious, the most highly revered place in the whole world, the goal of pilgrimages from all countries. Hither march the crusaders, a wave of steel and iron, on whose foamy crest gleam the coats-of-arms and the standards of the noblest families of Europe. They are animated by *one* thought: to liberate the sepulchre of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even children are seized by enthusiasm and set out on their way in tens of thousands.

The cross, which blood-lusting hate had prepared for Him, becomes a signal of victory, the imperial standard of the realm of Christ, rising from thousands of towers; a symbol of honor on the breast of the prelate, on shield and coat-of-arms of the knight; an emblem of veneration, of comfort, of refuge in living-room and meeting-hall, on meadow and hill-crest, in the hand of the child and the dying old man; a symbol of hope on the grave. Each particle of the wood of the cross was carefully preserved, mounted in gold and jewels, and reverently kissed by the lips of millions. The dead tree is again come to life and stands forth gloriously in the marvelous beauty of its foliage. All the devotions and benedictions of the Church are blossoms of this tree. *"Vexilla regis prodeunt!"*

The thorns, the nails, the lance, and the burial linens are also preserved and venerated as precious relics.

Christ's blood-soaked cloak becomes an official treasure of the Holy Roman Empire, and millions of pilgrims journey to its shrine.

Everything becomes a trophy of victory, everything is transfigured by the radiance of the Resurrection!

III. Christ's Victory Over Suffering and Disgrace

1) All suffering and disgrace are transformed into joy and glory. St. Ignatius remarks in his book on the Spiritual Exercises, at the beginning of the fourth week: "I meditate on how the divinity, which seemed to conceal itself during the suffering, now looms so brilliantly at the sacred Resurrection and reveals itself by true and most sacrosanct effects."

Bellecius fittingly pieces the contrasts together with the words taken from Scripture: *"Qui antea erat inops et pauper, nunc dives est et Dominus universae terrae. Qui nudius-tertius non erat nisi vermis, opprobrium hominum et abjectio plebis, modo gloria et honore coronatus sedet ad dexteram majestatis in excelsis," etc. (Medulla Asceseos seu Exerc. S. P. N. Ignatii).*

Now all is light, brilliance, joy! *"Induit eum Dominus pater stola immortalitatis et gloriae, et coronam pulchritudinis posuit super caput ejus, jucunditatem et exsultationem thesaurizavit super eum! Totum igitur in eo plenum est gaudio, totum laetitia cumulatum, totum exsultatione refertum! Caro enim Christi, flos ille pulcherrimus de radice Jesse, qui in nativitate floruit, in passione defloruit, in resurrectione refloruit, ut omnium esset decor."* (Ludolphus of Saxony).

2) Exteriorly this transfiguration becomes evident chiefly in the most sacred body of the Risen Saviour. This glorified body is

a) *A real body* with all that pertains thereto, bones, flesh, blood, hair, etc. The Lord Himself says: "Handle, and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see Me to have" (Luke xxiv, 39). He speaks, comes, goes, like a living man. He even eats before the eyes of the disciples, as evidence that He is indeed risen and has reassumed His true body, not taken to Himself a mere phantom. Even the vegetative functions are proper to the glorified body, although we do not hold with Durandus that the food is changed into the substance of the body, since the glorified life excludes all corruption.

b) It is *the same body* which the Lord had before, and which still bears the scars of the crucifixion. But it now displays new characteristics. It is no longer the earthly body, capable of suffering, but the glorified eternal body. True, the risen Saviour must, while sojourning on earth in His glorified body, adapt Himself to conditions, soften the radiance of its glory, so that He may approach His own. It is, therefore, the same body, and yet not the same body, as formerly. From all evidence it is apparent that He is clearly to be recognized as the Master in figure, features, eyes, and yet changed, more spiritual, more ethereal. In His contacts He is as human, cordial, and winning as before, and yet different, so that they look up to Him with wonder and reverence. There is something new, something strange about Him and some time is required before they again grow accustomed to His appearance.

c) Theologians note *four new characteristics* of the glorified body in particular. First, there is that glowing

radiance (*claritas*) that had transitorily shown itself on Mount Thabor, where "His face did shine as the sun and His garments became white as snow" (Matt. xvii, 2). To this must be added immortality and incapability of suffering (*immortalitas, impassibilitas*). "Knowing, that Christ, rising again from the dead, dieth now no more, death shall no more have dominion over Him" (Rom. vi, 9). By virtue of its lightness and agility (*agilitas*) the glorified body of Christ is like unto the spirit, which, unburdened by gravity, moves in a flash from place to place. Thus the Lord appears and disappears, soars lightly as a cloud to heaven. Finally, the glorified body is characterized by fineness and subtility (*subtilitas*), so that it passes unhindered through everything, as a sunbeam passes through a window pane.

A weak simile of this glorification is the transfiguration of soul or mind, the matured, refined character found in saintly persons as a fruit of self-discipline; to the Saint a sort of *"impassibilitas"* and *"immortalitas"* are also proper, since he has become master over suffering and sin, and no longer dies spiritually; a sort of *"agilitas,"* evidenced in the ease with which he practices virtue perfectly; a *"subtilitas,"* showing itself in perfect unselfishness and purity of endeavor; and, finally, a *"claritas,"* noticeable in perfect refinement and in the beneficent light of good example, a reflection of the inner light of grace. How greatly many priests lack this sublimation! How rude, sensual, hard, stubborn, indolent, and harsh are their souls! Even after many years of priestly life they show not a trace of transfiguration!

VI. THE CONTINUANCE OF THE RESURRECTION

I. Easter in the Church

a) The joy of the first Easter has not wholly died down, but reverberates through the centuries in the great feast of Easter, the *sollemnitas sollemnitatum.* Each year it surges anew through the Church the world over in the joyful ringing of bells, in the mighty pealing of organs, in festive hymns resonant with joy. *"Alleluja! Resurrexit sicut dixit! Haec dies, quam fecit Dominus; exsultemus et laetemur in ea!"—"Alacrior dies illa refulget,"* says St. Augustine, *"non de usitatis solis circulis illuminata praeclarius, sed de lumine agni resurgentis illustrata sublimius"* (*Sermo de resurr.*). And Louis of Granada: *"Post diem illum universalis judicii, in quo merces operum suorum cuique dabitur, nullus est dies in mundo majoris et universalioris gaudii quam dies ille, quo Christus a mortuis resurrexit."*

This day naturally became the Great Sabbath of the Church, the *Dominica dies par excellence.* No feast of the year is so utterly immersed in joy and jubilation. Out in the open is the fragrance and sunshine of the young spring; within the houses, a holiday glistening and gleaming, cheerfulness, an Easter dinner; in the churches the pealing of the organ and the music of Easter hymns; in the hearts, peace, comfort, joy! *Pax vobis!*

This is the *laetitia paschalis!* If ever true joy reigns in the entire Church and in the hearts of her children, then it is surely on "this day which the Lord has made."

"Nunc introducit nos rex in cellaria sua, nunc surgit amica mea Maria, hiems abiit, pluvia recessit, flores visi sunt in terra nostra." (Ludolphus of Saxony; cfr. Cant. of Cant. ii).

b) We also find expressions and effects of the Easter rejoicing of the Church in *art* and *literature*. The pictures in the Catacombs reflect the joy of the early Christians over Christ's Resurrection. We find there the prefigurations of the risen Saviour, which told the Christians everything, the uninitiated nothing. We find Jonas, who dwelt three days in the belly of the fish; Samson, who tears the gates that were to hold him prisoner from their hinges and carries them up the mountain; Joseph, who is liberated from prison, etc.

The Middle Ages enjoyed Easter tales and Easter laughter (*risus paschalis*), which, although in part unbecoming, nevertheless contained much true poetry, humor and wisdom.

How extensively Goethe availed himself of the celebration of Easter in his "Faust"! He lets the Easter chimes resound and the choirs of Angels sing their paschal hymns, and Faust, who has already raised the cup of poison to his lips, obtains new courage to live.

II. Easter in the Life of the Individual Christian

a) The Resurrection of Christ is a constant spur to the individual believer to rise from the sleep of sin or indifference to a new, active life. "Let us feast not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and

truth" (1 Cor. v, 8). How many find the way back to the confessional at Easter and make a new effort towards living a good Christian life!

b) Christ's Resurrection has also deprived death of its bitterness. We may cherish the firm confidence that He will raise His faithful servants from the dead, even according to the body, unto a new, beatific life.

Jesus lives, His life is mine,
Death, where is thy vaunted power?
Jesus lives and will assign
Faithful life's immortal dower.

"Sui capitis gloriam sequuntur membra. Redemptor ergo noster suscepit mortem, ne mori timeamus, ostendit resurrectionem, ut nos resurgere posse confidamus" (Greg. M., *Moral.*, XIV, c. 27).—*"Christus totius spei nos forma praecessit"* (Leo M., *Serm. de res.*).—*"Heri cum Christo in crucem angebar, hodie simul vivificor. Heri consepeliebar, hodie simul resurgo"* (Greg. Naz., *Or.*, 41).

III. Easter in Heaven

a) The rejoicing of the Church Militant is carried farther, into eternity, and there, in the lightsome mansions of Heaven, the true Paschal feast is celebrated, the feast of eternal victory, of salvation, of resurrection, and of glorification. This is the Easter-day which knows no night, the Alleluia which is never silenced, the great Sunday which is not followed by days of toil. This it is that our heart longs for so mightily—eternal rest, eternal peace, eternal joy.

b) In Heaven the Blessed will group themselves about the risen Saviour and partake of the radiance of His glorification. Their bodies will resemble His Sacred Body. He "will reform the body of our lowness made like to the body of His glory" (Phil. iii, 21).

Each of the Blessed will be recognizable in his individuality, but free from earthly dross, weakness, and ugliness, finer, nobler, more beautiful, transfigured, spiritualized. What a difference between a man who, stricken by severe, lingering illness, has wasted features, is hollow-eyed, emaciated, disfigured, and the same man who, restored to health by effective treatment, steps up to you in the pink of condition, vigorous, with the color of health in his cheeks and its light in his eyes, as though he were risen from the dead! Both are the same person, and yet what a difference!

Like the Body of Christ, the bodies of the Blessed will shine with a wonderful radiance. "Then shall the just shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. xiii, 43). The bodies of the Blessed will also be immortal and incapable of suffering. "Sown in corruption, it shall rise in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it shall rise in glory; it is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power; it is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body" (1 Cor. xv, 42–44). The glorified body will have lost its awkwardness, it will be able to move quickly, and be refined like unto fire, which penetrates everywhere. "The just shall shine and shall run to and fro among the reeds" (Wis. iii, 7).

c) The glorified life is not a disconnected, isolated thing, but stands in a natural relation to the life on

earth, of which it is a continuation, a completion, a ripening. The individual is the same, only more perfect, more refined, more spiritual. Hence, it is nothing more than the realization of an ideal, indicated on earth only in a shadowy manner: the ideal of physical life, of freedom of motion, liberated from all weaknesses and drawbacks of the present transition state.

The flower is at the height of its life when it unfolds to fullest bloom. But the flower passes away. It is not destined to live as an individual, but only in its kind. Therefore, it must ripen to seed and then wither. In the life beyond this purpose no longer holds good. There springtime endures in its glory and youthful beauty; it is not followed by a hot summer, a denuding autumn, a killing winter. Eternal youth, this great wish and longing of man, there becomes a reality. Its foundation and exemplar is the Resurrection of Christ.

II. THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE TRUTH OF THE RESURRECTION

I. THE ENEMIES' FRAME OF MIND

1. Their Worry

a) When Jesus died on the cross, His enemies believed they had conquered Him. But His marvelous calm and dignity, the startling signs and phenomena at His death, their mighty influence on the people—all this dampened their sense of victory to a marked degree.

b) Moreover, His mysterious words regarding the sign of Jonas (Matt. xii, 39) and the destruction and rapid reconstruction of the Temple (John ii, 19) disturbed them. They had understood these words quite well and had by no means forgotten them, and now they were worried concerning them. That might seem strange. If Christ were a mere man, as they maintained, why did they worry about His words, which, coming from the lips of an ordinary mortal, would have been naught but mad raving? We have here one of the many inconsistencies of unbelief, explained by its inner hollowness, the consciousness of its weakness, and its evil conscience. No less vivid, serious, and overwhelming did the raising of Lazarus from the dead loom in their

memory. All of this is to them a warning like unto the handwriting on the wall of Balthasar's palace.

c) The enemies of the Church today are in precisely the same predicament. They never truly enjoy their "victories." The invincibility and indestructibility of the Church of Christ are written with massive letters on the pages of history. Again and again the Church rearose, strong with the vigor of youth, from tomb and corruption.

II. The Measures They Adopt

How greatly troubled the Sanhedrin were, in spite of all outward display of confidence, is evidenced by the measures they adopted to frustrate the Resurrection of Christ, which they feared.

a) The guard at the sepulchre. The enemies of Christ petition Pilate for a guard and obtain it (Matt. xxvii, 62 ff.). It was, therefore, a Roman guard (Matt. xxviii, 24). Possibly the high priests did not trust their own people sufficiently. The latter knew too much of Jesus and might have been startled by the happenings at His death. One need but think of the band that had been sent out against the Saviour to capture Him. (John vii, 45.) Under the circumstances, foreign mercenaries would be more dependable.

The guard at the sepulchre had a very specific providential significance. In the mind of the enemies it was to prevent any clerical deception, to be perpetrated with the aid of a possible miracle; in fact, however, by a wise dispensation of Providence, it became a herald

and witness of the Resurrection. The Lord might not and could not show himself in person to His enemies, as we shall see later; the testimony of the disciples alone would not have sufficed. Thus the Resurrection would have remained a quiet family feast of the little Church, without influence on the people at large and the world. That was against the design of Providence, and hence the guards were forced to appear as witnesses.

b) The official seal. A new tomb, hewn into the rock, the private sepulchre of a noble family, received the Sacred Body and was closed with a heavy stone, probably cut for the purpose, in order to prevent any violation of the grave. The circumstance that Christ's tomb was the property of His friends, might give rise to suspicion. And now His enemies themselves take the necessary steps to render all evasions impossible. They placed their official seal on the lock and stationed their own guard before the tomb. The sepulchre of the outlawed one was secured by guard and seal, so that all trickery of the Clericals would be prevented. However: *"Quanto diligentius servatur, tanto magis resurgentis virtus ostenditur"* (St. Jerome).

Thus all the occurrences happening about and in connection with the sepulchre of Christ manifest a special dispensation of Providence, thwarting the plans of His enemies and disposing all things so that they, against their will, had to aid in confirming the truth of the Resurrection.

Unbelief has remained precisely the same from that day to this. It declares in advance that all miracles are

impossible, and yet anxiously keeps watch over the Church lest she work a miracle and thus give some sign of her supernatural power and mission.

To this very day one may see in the house of the stigmatized Ann Catherine Emmerick at Dülmen the official seals affixed by order of the government to the windows of the humble chamber of the virgin to officially control the miracle and disprove it—a scarcely honorable monument of a narrow and anything but liberal-minded policy.

And of what avail were all the numerous police ordinances, guards and official seals during the Kulturkampf in Germany? They could not hold the Church imprisoned in the tomb.

And if in England it was possible, in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, to muzzle the Church for a time—she experienced a "second spring" (Newman).

II. THE GUARDS AT THE TOMB

I. Their Experience

a) Probably it was the same guard which Pilate had assigned to the Jews for the days of the Pasch and for the seizure of the Lord. "You have a guard," he said (Matt. xxvii, 65.) Hence, these guards had probably participated in the arrest of Jesus and witnessed His power. As a result, they were not entirely at ease when this second commission was assigned to them. Yet what was to happen was to be for them the operation of grace, and it is by no means improbable that,

as previously during the events on Golgotha, some of them were so deeply impressed that they joined the disciples of Jesus. Possibly the latter learned the detailed circumstances from them, unless Jesus Himself related them.

b) Early on the first day following the Sabbath, that is, on the third day after His burial, the Lord raised Himself from the tomb and came forth by His own power, just as He later passed through locked doors. However, the Resurrection was to be made known to the outside world by exterior, visible circumstantial happenings. A tremendous earthquake accompanied the major event. A heavenly messenger, garbed in a garment shedding rays of light that dazzled as lightning, appeared as a page who opens the door when the King leaves His chamber. The soldiers, mortally frightened, reach for their swords as the earth begins to tremble beneath their feet and a dull rumbling sound is heard. But the mere sight of the angel descending like a flash of lightning and hurling the stone away from the tomb, paralyzed them and they fell to earth as if they were dead. "For fear of Him the guards were struck with terror and became as dead men" (Matt. xxviii, 4). This appearance of the angel was necessary in order to establish what happened as an act of immediate intervention on the part of God.

c) The guards are confronted with a fact which allows of no doubt. They feel that this is the same power which had cast them to earth at the Mount of Olives when the Lord said "I am He." They fail to see Him, but the empty sepulchre shows them what has

happened, and the appearance of the angel proves the intervention of a higher power.

When eternity radiates its light, all opposition and doubt cease. How will it be when once the trumpets of judgment resound! Unbelief will then collapse in fear and terror! *Quantus tremor est futurus . . .* !

II. Their Testimony

The overwhelming weight of the fact bore down upon the rude but honest soldiers with elementary force. Not even the rudest can withstand such impressions. Pale terror is graven on their bearded faces as they come running to the palace of the high priest. The extreme excitement caused by their experience crowds out every other thought. They must bear witness to the truth. Something tremendous has happened. Such an event cannot be kept secret.

They report to the Sanhedrin because they had been assigned to it by Pilate and therefore were in its service. Moreover, the event was of greatest interest to the Jews.

Their report, accurately mentioning all details—the earthquake, the appearance of the angel, his lightning-like manner and actions, the hurling away of the stone —is the immediate result of a startling experience and is so unmistakably stamped with the impress of truth that the Jewish priests themselves had to accept the fact. Moreover, the occurrences at Christ's death had shown them that they had by no means triumphed, but that a higher power protected Him. In short, the truth

is so thoroughly substantiated that Christ's enemies, too, have to reckon with it.

Forty days later the Apostles proclaimed the Resurrection before the whole people. No one dared denounce them as liars. All that was done was to forbid them to preach.

III. THE SANHEDRIN

I. Their Hardness of Heart

a) Once the guards at the sepulchre had made their report, even the high priests could no longer doubt the fact of the Resurrection. At that moment it became their duty to believe. Everything—Christ's entire life, His labors, His undeniable miracles, His Passion and death and all the accompanying phenomena, and now the wholly unique fact of the Resurrection, the sign that had been promised them—demonstrated in an overwhelming manner that He was truly the Son of God, that the prophecy of Isaias (ch. liii) had been fulfilled word for word.

The divine, the supernatural, the absolutely convincing testimony for Christ was tangibly evident.

b) And yet—the Jewish priests remained obstinate! Not a trace of conversion, introspection, or change of heart! This conduct shows how wisely the Lord acted when He did not show Himself publicly to His enemies. Even in that event they would have sought and found evasions, just as the rationalists of our own day do.

For they *will* not believe, they refuse to surrender

their stubborn position; for that would mean a confession of the injustice they had committed, their submission to Jesus, their acknowledgment of Him as the Messias. That simply cannot be! Thus it happens that the Resurrection, which brings grace, joy, benediction to the disciples and the faithful, becomes the occasion of the rejection of the high priests.

And so it is to-day! God, the Church, the priesthood, the faithful must not appear to be right, must not seem victorious! Rather hurl oneself open-eyed into the abyss!

c) But how is that possible? The *credibilitas fidei* is *certa, i. e.,* it offers complete security which excludes every reasonable doubt and leaves room only for an unreasonable, stubborn refusal. This sort of resistance can be overcome only by evidence such as we have not and cannot possibly have, since faith must be free. Here we see quite clearly that, in the last instance, faith ultimately depends on the will.

Once the sinner is hardened in evil-doing, grace and illumination will avail him nothing. He has but one aim: perversion of the truth. In its pursuit, he has recourse to the basest of means: lies, bribery, deception.

II. Attempts to Cover Up the Truth

a) The Council

"And they [the chief priests] being assembled together with the ancients took counsel" (Matt. xxviii, 12). The session of the council and its decisions are

extremely characteristic, and compare fully in malice with that other session of the Sanhedrin in which the death of Jesus was agreed upon.

Regardless of the palpable evidence of divine intervention, the fact of the Resurrection and the conclusions to be derived therefrom are simply tabled. Admit the Resurrection, *i. e.*, intervention by God in behalf of Jesus?—that simply must not be! This essential question, it appears, was not even discussed. The priests themselves will not believe, and they do not wish the people to believe. We have here the fulfilment of the words of Jesus: "Woe to you lawyers, for you have taken away the key of knowledge: you yourselves have not entered in, and those that were entering in, you have hindered" (Luke xi, 52).

They fear with reason that the people, already prepared and stirred by the phenomena at Christ's death, would, if the Resurrection became known, decide *en masse* in favor of Christ, as indeed happened on the feast of Pentecost. That must not, that shall not be! The priests and scribes had used every effort to cast suspicion on the miracles wrought by Jesus as artifices of the devil, and now they employ every means to veil the fact of the Resurrection, which changed their victory into defeat. Their chief objective is to save their face at all costs, to maintain their position, to prevent appearing to be in the wrong.

But what were they to do? It was not possible to simply ignore the event, since the sepulchre of Christ had already attracted general interest and the empty tomb demanded an explanation. It was impossible to

attempt to conceal what had occurred, since rumors had already begun to circulate through the city and since all the soldiers of the guard had witnessed the event.

A judicial investigation, with the aid of false witnesses, would prove dangerous. They had had an evil experience with false witnesses already.

Nothing then remained to be done but to deceive the people by falsifying the report of the witnesses and misrepresenting the facts. It seemed best to cast suspicion on the disciples and to accuse them of having stolen the body. The proposal met with approval. It served to tide over embarrassment for the time being.

b) The Bribe

The first thing to do was to enlist the soldiers in the deception. Since the latter were evidently greatly disturbed by their experience, the members of the Sanhedrin probably endeavored first of all to convince them they had witnessed some of the devil's tricks, that the earthquake had been a perfectly natural phenomenon, etc. That may not have been an easy task. But it must have been even more difficult to seduce these rude but straightforward men into telling a lie.

It was, in fact, a preposterous imposition on the soldiers to expect them to declare that the disciples had stolen the body while they slept. If all of them had slept, how could they testify to what they had not seen? How could they know it was the disciples who had taken the body? If only some had been asleep, why did the others not awaken them? How deep their sleep must

have been, as they were not disturbed by the rolling-away of the large stone! Again, what would Pilate say? A severe penalty was attached to sleeping on duty by a guard.

"They gave a great sum of money to the soldiers" (Matt. xxviii, 12). They had engaged a traitor with money. True, they had dealt niggardly with Judas. They cannot afford to act similarly towards the Roman soldiers. It was necessary to spend a large sum. For by their lie the soldiers exposed themselves to the danger of court-martial, which made short shift of such matters. And even if, by intervention of the Sanhedrin, this danger might be averted, they still courted the loss of their military honor, for there was no greater disgrace for a Roman soldier than to sleep on guard duty.

The magic power of money finally overcame all objections. Money can buy everything, everybody—layman, priest, soldier, Apostle. The most disgraceful deeds have been committed for the sake of lucre.

They had to reach deeply into their purses. But fear makes the Jew generous. This time everything was at stake. Besides, they probably took these wages of sin from the temple treasury, not from their own pockets. Hence it was sacred money, even as the thirty pieces of silver had been.

To what expense do not the enemies of Christ go when an opportunity offers of holding down the Church or of preferring some charge against her?

And how often, even to-day, is not sacred money, the offering of piety and poverty, shamefully misused!

The guard agreed to the entire transaction, probably

on condition that the Sanhedrin guaranteed them immunity from punishment at Pilate's hands. True Roman soldiers would never have acted thus. Possibly these guards were mercenaries.

c) The Lie

It might seem strange that the Sanhedrin should have recourse to this threadbare falsehood of the stealing of the body and offering the "sleeping guardsmen" as witnesses of the theft. They probably relied upon the thoughtlessness of the masses, which had proved its value at the death trial. Anything at all could be told the masses, just as at present they are told anything at all by the newspapers. And the council were not wholly mistaken. Though they did not succeed in stopping the victorious march of truth, they achieved at least this much, that the lie gained ground in Jerusalem and far beyond its walls. When Matthew wrote his gospel, eight years had passed since the event, and yet the lie was still current. The Evangelist could brand it without being contradicted, although at that time eye-witnesses of the events were still alive. According to Justin (*Contra Tryph.*), the Jews in Jerusalem sent special messengers with a corresponding report to the outlying communities and thus spread the lie everywhere. Possibly that is the explanation of the strenuous opposition encountered later by St. Paul.

As a matter of fact various circumstances favored the Jews at this time, as during the trial of Jesus. Then Caiphas had correctly sensed that the mass of the peo-

ple, willing as they were to regard and honor Jesus as a great prophet and miracle worker, nevertheless neither understood nor recognized His Divine Nature and essential identity with the God of Israel. From this he derived cause and pretext for the condemnation of Jesus. So now too he probably could depend with some measure of security upon the masses, even if, in consequence of the phenomena accompanying Jesus' death, they believed in His innocence, not being able to rise to a belief in His Resurrection, which even the disciples found difficult to grasp. Under the circumstances, the purchased silence of the guards and the lie concerning the stealing of the body could serve Caiphas' purposes.

To this must be added the circumstance that, as the silence observed by Jesus at the trial had greatly helped the plans of the chief priests, so now His non-appearance rendered them a similar service.

Unquestionably His enemies feared that, having risen from the dead, He would now immediately appear and show Himself and thus wholly discredit them with the people. Therefore, the people were even now to be influenced against belief in the fact of a true Resurrection. But what they feared did not happen. This put Christ's enemies at ease and enabled them to mislead the people the more boldly. "If he is risen, why does he not appear in public? Therefore he is not risen from the dead." If it was so very difficult for the Apostles to believe in His Resurrection, even though they saw Him, how were the people to believe in it without having seen Him?

Modern unbelief and the enemies of the Church proceed in precisely the same manner as did the Sanhedrin when there is question of doing away with a disagreeable fact or a miracle. Everything is done to mislead the people and to influence public opinion against the Church. The press is bought, officials are bribed, witnesses are seduced into remaining silent or making false statements. Bribery, forgery, lies—they all make their rounds again and again. Lie, lie, lie, admonishes Voltaire, something will always stick!

And what a persistent life these lies have even today! One may refute them a hundred times, yet they return again and again. And what harm this policy of lies still wreaks! Entire nations and sections of the people grow up in this atmosphere of fog, and all attempts at enlightenment and correction are in vain.

Unutterably stupid, idiotic lies are hatched out against priests and religious, disseminated by a mercenary press, embalmed in text-books, nay, even in learned works, and presented as the result of scientific research.

What a villainous rôle is played in some countries even today by funds set aside for corruption and bribery! And how often are officials and teachers literally drilled into keeping anti-Catholic lies alive!

IV. WHY THE RISEN SAVIOUR DID NOT APPEAR IN PUBLIC

Should He not have shown Himself in public? At first glance, many considerations seem to demand that

He should. At an early date Celsus raised the objection that Jesus should have appeared in public (cfr. Orig., *Contra Cels.*, II, 63). A public triumph seemed to be demanded by the public humiliation which He had undergone. Should not all who had seen the setting of the sun also view its glorious rising, so that they might be stirred out of their doubts?

And yet great theologians hold that it was more appropriate that the risen Christ should *not* appear in public. The chief reasons are:

1. The Resurrection did not come within the scope of earthly revelation, but properly belongs to the future glorification. *"Oculus non vidit, Deus, absque te, quae praeparasti exspectantibus te"* (Is. lxiv, 4).

This revelation was not intended for the public, but was a grace, a privilege, reserved for the small flock of the elect.

Thus it has remained in the Church of Christ. Extraordinary revelations are reserved for individual chosen souls.

2. The Risen Saviour had no further message for Israel, its priests and scribes.

Israel had definitively sealed its rejection: "His blood be upon us, and upon our children" (Matt. xxvii, 45).

Therefore Jesus had not referred Caiphas to His Resurrection, but to His return as judge. Even before that He had told them: "Therefore I said to you, that you shall die in your sins. For if you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins" (John viii, 24; cfr. 21).

Therefore, too, the Lord had from the beginning in-

structed His Apostles through the angel to go to Galilee.

Moreover, official Jewry would probably have abused a new dispensation of grace in the same manner as they had abused previous graces. We need not recall the sensation created by the raising of Lazarus. Everybody spoke of it, and even the members of the Sanhedrin could not deny the fact. Yet, the conclusion they drew from it was: He must die!

Would they have been converted by His sudden reappearance in their midst? Hardly! That is shown by their conduct on hearing the report of the guard at the tomb. They grasp the truth with both hands, yet they refuse to believe.

3. The Resurrection was indeed to be made known to all and to serve as a powerful motive for faith; but it was to be done mediately, by the "witnesses preordained by God," as Peter emphatically insists (Acts x, 41; i, 22; iv, 33).

The phenomena accompanying the death of Christ had sufficed to convince the well-intentioned, or at least to render them amenable to the preaching of the Apostles. They showed that the crucified Saviour had not died as a vanquished leader, but that God was on His side, and therefore the Resurrection was a logical and wholly credible event. That was proven, too, by the events of Pentecost, which demonstrated that vast masses of the people were deeply impressed. Even the Sanhedrin did not at this time dare deny the fact of the Resurrection. They had recourse to violent measures and sought to silence the witnesses.

This indirect testimony corresponds to the principle of divine government of the world, which enlightens and leads some through others, as is evident in the Old Testament. Moses alone saw the Lord on Mt. Sinai, the prophets alone were vouchsafed special revelations. They were told to communicate to others what they had seen and heard.

Thus it is to be in the New Testament also. The faith of the Church rests on the testimony of the Apostles which possesses every guaranty of truth. The future vision shall be merited by faith, and this faith shall be free. Only the final revelation on the day of the last judgment will compel faith. Then each eye shall gaze upon Him, they also, "that pierced Him" (Apoc. i, 7). *Ego sum!*

V. MODERN UNBELIEF AND THE RESURRECTION

St. Augustine designates the machinations of the Sanhedrin as *"perfidia Iudaeorum."* What would he have said of those so-called "Christians" who, since the days of Reimarus and his "Wolfenbüttel Fragments," seek incessantly to cast suspicion on the testimony of the Evangelists concerning the Resurrection?

One silly hypothesis after another made its appearance, but to all of them applies what is written regarding the witnesses appearing at the trial of Jesus: *"Non erat conveniens testimonium illorum"* (Mark xiv, 59). Their testimony did not agree: one refuted the other.

a) Reimarus resurrected the hoary hypothesis of deception which originated with the chief priests and the

Talmud: the disciples were said to have stolen the body and spread the report that Christ had risen. But what would have been the purpose of such a theft? Could a corpse have encouraged the Apostles? And why were the body-snatchers not seized and forced to surrender the body? Would not contemporary Jewish literature resound with a triumphant echo of this robbery story if it had any basis in fact?

Is it to be wondered at that even the rationalist Strauss gives no credence to this hypothesis of deception? Conscious deception on the part of the disciples, he says, is entirely out of the question (*Leben Jesu*, Vol. II, p. 685). "This suspicion," he thinks, "was sufficiently refuted by Origen's remark (*C. Cels.*, II, 56), that a lie invented by the disciples could not possibly have inspired the Apostles to so valiant a profession of faith in the Resurrection of Christ—a profession by which they incurred the greatest danger—and apologists quite properly insist that the tremendous change from extreme depression and utter hopelessness at the death of Jesus to the strength of faith and inspiration with which the disciples proclaimed Him as the Messias on the feast of Pentecost, is inexplicable on any other assumption than that something of an exceptionally encouraging nature had meanwhile happened, something that had convinced them that the crucified Jesus had come to life again."

That "something" could only have been a firmly established and most important fact—precisely the Resurrection. Instead of admitting this, which would

have been the logical conclusion from his own premises, Strauss takes refuge behind the silly

b) Hypothesis of self-deception on the part of the disciples. In company with Renan and other rationalist critics he assumes that the disciples, greatly saddened by the death of Jesus, burning with an ardent desire for Him and disturbed alike in soul and nerves, had, by a vivid play of the imagination, persuaded themselves that they really saw Him. It is evident how little this theory corresponds with the narrative of the Evangelists. Moreover, the disciples were not nervously overstrung, hysterical women, but hale, sturdy men of the people, who bowed only to what they actually saw, heard, and felt. And to take for granted that hundreds of persons in various places and at different times were victims of such self-deception presupposes a faith that is utterly blind.

c) Paulus of Heidelberg had recourse to the hypothesis of apparent death; according to him the unconscious Saviour was revived by the odor of the spices and the coolness of the tomb. A number of stubborn facts disprove this airy fantasy: the spear-thrust piercing the heart; the report of the soldiers; the judgment not only of the friends of Christ, but also of His enemies; the Oriental method of embalming. Here again Strauss correctly says: "A man who had crept out of the grave, who crawled around feebly, who needed medical help, bandages, strengthening food and rest, and who finally succumbed to suffering, could not possibly have created the impression of one who had

conquered death and was Lord of life—which impression inspired the later career of the disciples. Such a revival could not possibly have converted their sadness into enthusiasm or raised their devotion to the pitch of adoration." [1]

Adolph von Harnack distinguishes between the *message* regarding the physical resurrection of Jesus and the disciples' *belief* in the continuation of His soul, His ideas, and His work. He rejects the message because he is infected and burdened by the preconceived idea of the impossibility of miracles.

Just as the unbelieving chief priests by their silly conduct bore indirect witness to the Resurrection, so the absurd and ridiculous contentions of modern unbelief are but a proof of the unshakable truth. To them, too, apply the words of St. Paul: "*Et a veritate quidem auditum avertent, ad fabulas autem convertentur*" (2 Tim. iv. 4); they refuse to listen to the truth and turn aside unto fables.

[1] *Leben Jesu*, I, 387; cfr. Brunsmann-Preuss, *A Handbook of Fundamental Theology*, II, 450.

III. THE FORTY DAYS AFTER THE RESURRECTION

I. THEIR PURPOSE

I. The Welfare of the Church

a) Strengthening the Church

The Lord remained on earth forty days after His Resurrection (Acts i, 3), in order to comfort and strengthen the nascent Church and to prepare His followers for a permanent separation. He proceeds like a mother wishing to wean her child; she does not do it at once, but gradually (Louis of Granada).

Had the separation occurred immediately after the death of the Saviour, it would have had a depressing effect and would have reduced the number of the faithful to a dwindling few, aye, in the natural course of events it would have meant the end of the Church. The final separation could only take place after His glorious Resurrection and the magic of His glorified appearance had immersed the small flock in Paschal consolation and the triple golden bond of faith, hope, and charity had again been indissolubly fastened. Then indeed He could depart with an easy mind and leave the Church to herself, *i. e.,* to the supernatural forces He

had imparted to her. All depended on the firm, inseparable attachment of the faithful to the sacred Person of the Lord.

True, this bond had been tied already during the three years of Christ's public life. But it had been loosened by the tragedy of the Passion and was concerned chiefly with the sacred Humanity. Now the divine side of His being was to be revealed fully and wholly, for the strengthening of the faith.

This was done primarily by the fact, established beyond all doubt, of His Resurrection—*praebuit seipsum vivum . . . in multis argumentis* (Acts i, 3)—and by His providing them with overwhelming proofs of His Divinity, all of which was ultimately crowned by His Ascension into Heaven, the most magnificent revelation of His Divinity.

They were strengthened in hope and joy. They saw how everything happened as the Lord had foretold, how His predictions were more amply fulfilled than He had led them to expect. What He had promised at parting: "I go . . . sorrow hath filled your heart . . . but I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice" (John xvi, 22) was fulfilled in a marvelous manner. *"Gavisi sunt discipuli viso Domino."* Everything was far more beautiful and grand than they had expected. They therefore could place full confidence in all His other promises. Hope and confidence grew firm as a rock, prepared to meet life and death, which the disciples no longer fear, since they have seen how glorious life blossoms forth from suffering and death.

Their charity, their love for the Saviour, too, was in-

flamed. How loving, tender and gentle the Lord is! How winsome His bearing at His various appearances! His love has arisen with Him, but now it is more glorified, more tender, more cordial than before. Everything breathes a love more intimate and cordial than ever. *"Domine, tu scis, quia amo te!"* Thus their love grew stronger than death, qualifying them for everything, carrying them over everything, the love of Christ and love for Christ, which is the heart of the Church.

The total result is extraordinarily abundant. Faith in Christ as God and conqueror over death and hell became unshakably profound, the scandal of the cross was removed once and for all time, a sacred enthusiasm for Christ and His Church was enkindled. During these forty days the Lord also lovingly accustomed them to remain firm and in union with one another, even without His visible presence. They came to understand that He was not going to leave them to their own devices, that they could depend upon Him. Thus the final separation was prepared.

b) Institution of the Church

The phrase, *"loquens de regno Dei"* (Acts i, 3) summarizes everything. Many things were discussed for the future, others left for the "Spirit of Truth" to take care of.

The Lord reminds them of what they had previously heard, enlarges their knowledge, dissolves their doubts, answers their questions. He reveals to them the entire economy of salvation in its gradual development. *"Et*

incipiens a Moyse et omnibus prophetis . . ." (Luke xxiv, 27). In the light of the Resurrection many things became perfectly clear to them which they had previously failed to understand or to grasp fully. St. John probably refers above all to the rich store of knowledge and enlightenment which they acquired during these forty days when he says: "*Sunt autem et alia multa*" (John xxi, 25).

In particular they acquire a correct conception of the Church as the kingdom of Christ, not confined to Judea, Samaria, etc., but embracing all countries and nations. "*Eritis mihi testes . . . usque ad ultimum terrae*" (Acts i, 8). Thus they learn to understand more clearly their task as Apostles. "*Euntes ergo docete omnes gentes*" (Matt. xxviii, 19; cfr. Mark xvi, 15; Luke xxiv, 47; John xx, 21). They were equipped with all necessary powers, graces, and charismata. It will require time, indeed, before they will fully grasp these utterly un-Jewish ideas, particularly since their own vision of the Universal Church naturally corresponds with their concept of the world.

Thus the hierarchic organization and constitution of the Church (Apostles—bishops, disciples—priests) was determined, the Primacy established by the appointment of Peter as Christ's vicar, to head and lead His Church.

Important Sacraments were instituted and administered: Baptism, as the basis of the supernatural life in God and as a condition of membership in the mystical body of Christ; the Sacrament of Penance as mediation of the grace of salvation. At almost all manifestations we find references to the Eucharist, our religious wor-

ship in its fundamental features thus going back to these early days. The Eucharistic celebration is to be the center of their meetings, a constant reminder and renewal of their union with Christ.

In short, Christ communicates to His followers everything pertaining to the founding and the constitution of His Church; the entire organization and discipline of the Church is thus established.

These forty days are for us the fountain of ecclesiastical tradition, from which the young Church draws nourishment for an entire generation, until gradually a part of it is set down in the Gospels and Epistles, while the remainder continues to live in oral tradition.

Whoever devotes Himself zealously to the Spiritual Exercises of the Retreat may experience something similar to the life of the disciples during these forty days. In devout meditation he may see the Saviour coming forth from the tomb, appearing to His own, comforting and instructing them, and is comforted himself and enlightened with respect to his conduct of life. The Holy Spirit must complete everything.

II. Introduction to Sacred Scripture

a) Explanation of Scripture

"He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things that were concerning Him" (Luke xxiv, 27). What He did first for the two disciples at Emmaus, He later did in the large room and on other occasions for all the others. "These are the words which I spoke to

you, while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and the Psalms concerning Me. Then He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures" (Luke xxiv, 44). This process does not so much signify the explaining of individual texts as rather the enlarging and enlightening of their vision for the whole. He was not content with offering them the external proofs of His Resurrection; they were also to understand and realize that these and all other things pertaining to Him and His kingdom had been foretold in the Scriptures, and how prophecy and fulfilment harmonized with each other.

How often in the past had the Lord not pointed to the Scriptures and declared that they gave testimony of Him! At that time they failed to understand Him or had but a hazy idea of His meaning. But now a bright light illumines them (cfr. John ii, 22; v, 39; v, 45 ff., xx, 9).

Gradually the true picture of the Messias arises before their eyes, and they grasp the deeper meaning of the Messianic prophecies. A new day breaks for them, everything is set into a new light, although they continue to interpret it in terms of Judaism. In this respect also they must wait for the Feast of Pentecost to bring them fullness of understanding.

What marvelous knowledge Peter displays in his first address to the people! He speaks eloquently and with great assurance. He displays a familiarity with the Scriptures utterly foreign to him before. We find an echo of Christ's enlightening explanation of the Scrip-

tures also in the Gospels. How often we read there: "That the Scriptures might be fulfilled."

b) Directions for the Explanation of the Scriptures

These explanations by the risen Lord are the source of our realization of the consonance between the Old and the New Testament and of the Messianic character of the prophecies. A great plan, distinguished by marvelous unity of thought, dominates the entire history of revelation. Everything is directed towards Christ, and we can understand the Old Testament fully and correctly only in the light of this reference to Him and His Church. We need but think of Mount Thabor, where Christ stands between Moses and Elias, the two greatest figures of the Old Testament, like the Holy of Holies between two candelabra.

"Then He opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures" (Luke xxiv, 45). He thereby imparted to the Church the right and the ability to expound the Scriptures. Holy Writ is a sealed book unless God opens it for us. The right and the ability to reveal its true meaning was granted by Christ to the Apostles and through them to the Church. Left to himself, man will read out of Holy Writ whatever suits him, as did the scribes in their time, who interpreted it in a sense precisely contrary to the truth. They found in it their own political concepts of the Messias, injected petty human notions into it, and refused to see or hear anything of the *"oportuit pati."* Consequently, they derived from it no light, no comfort, no

strength, but rather purely hypothetical sentences and assumptions, which other schools promptly rejected. Hillel offered one interpretation, Shammai another!

It was necessary for the Saviour to disclose the meaning of Sacred Scripture to them in a special manner. Beyond the obvious meaning of the words Holy Writ contains a deeper sense, and that is the proper sense, the thought of God, which He, to employ a comparison, breathed into the words written by men. "The letter killeth, but the spirit quickeneth" (2 Cor. iii, 6).

Consequently, no mere hermeneutics, no merely critical study of texts, no merely philological or archæological researches suffice to acquire a full understanding of the sense of Scripture. More is required, namely, the light of grace which reveals the sense. An humble spirit, a pious faith, the spirit of God, inner enlightenment by Him are necessary.

Many have made of the Scriptures a mere object of critical exegesis, prying into words and syllables instead of heeding the deeper sense and feeling the breath of God.

Reading the Sacred Scriptures in a prayerful spirit and meditating upon it, is a special duty of priests.

II. THE LIFE OF JESUS DURING THE FORTY DAYS AFTER THE RESURRECTION

1. During the days between His Resurrection and Ascension the Lord devotes Himself exclusively to the small flock of His faithful followers, is approachable only to them and visible to them alone. He celebrates

Easter with them. His intercourse with them is familiar and intimate.

The outside world learns only that He has risen and still lives. His enemies and the people at large must face this fact as best they may.

In a certain sense this is the case even today, and will remain so always. It is only a select group of disciples with whom He associates intimately, while the outside world, the great masses, are scarce conscious of His gracious presence and hold themselves at a distance, in part hostile, in part indifferent.

The life led by the Master during these days is entirely unique. He is still on earth, tangible and visible, but already enhaloed by the mysterious splendor of eternity. He appears to His own, but only to disappear again. He is the same, and yet another. The former fact fills His faithful followers with joyful satisfaction, while the latter causes them to look up to Him in mute reverence and with a certain shy restraint. The light of eternity is upon Him. He is on His way to the Father.

3. Would it not have been more fitting, theologians of the early Church ask, for the Lord to have remained constantly with His Apostles during these forty days? The object of His appearance, they argue, was to confirm His followers in the belief in His Resurrection, to console and instruct them, and that could be done better if He remained with them continuously!

To this later theologians answer: It was necessary for the disciples to understand two things clearly: First, the truth of the Resurrection and, second, the glorified character of the risen Saviour. The former

purpose would be adequately attained if the Lord appeared several times and on each occasion supplied ample proof that He truly lived and was not an apparition from the spirit world. Another object, however, was that the disciples be convinced that He had not returned to His former life, but was indeed, even at this time, dwelling in eternity. It was fitting, therefore, that He should not remain with them constantly, but rather should reveal Himself to them from time to time, *"ne nimia familiaritate occasionem praeberet existimandi eum ad idem genus vitae mortalis rediisse"* (Suarez). Hence, there was an unusual transition from one accustomed state to another, and that, naturally, of short duration. The Master Himself points to this difference in the words: *"Haec sunt verba, quae locutus sum ad vos, cum adhuc essem vobiscum"* (Luke xxiv, 44), that is, in a mortal body. Moreover, from the beginning He permits no hope in a long sojourn to rise in their hearts: "I am not yet ascended to My Father" (John xx, 17), He says to Mary Magdalen.

In this manner He accustoms His disciples to the thought of His absence and prepares them for the transition from His visible to His invisible (Eucharistic) presence. Pseudo-Justin writes (*Qu. et resp. ad orth.*, 48): *". . . voluisse Dominum desuefacere discipulos suos ab adspectu praesentiaque sui corporis eamque ob rem, quo tempore versabatur in terra post resurrectionem, non omnino se eis in conspectum praebuisse, sed per vices utcunque fecisse, ut ab eis et cerneretur et non cerneretur."*

IV. THE MANIFESTATIONS OF THE LORD IN GENERAL

I. THEIR OBJECT

a) Christ's appearances are partly of a private, partly of an official nature. The purpose of the former is chiefly to bestow reward and consolation, of the latter, besides affording consolation and encouragement, principally to perfect the establishment and organization of the Church.

b) All His manifestations, however, have one purpose in common—that of revealing the Divinity of the Lord, to dissipate the discouraging effects of His death, and to impress indelibly upon the souls of His disciples the image of His personality.

II. THEIR NUMBER AND SEQUENCE

a) If we set aside the Lord's journey into the nether world, and group together all His appearances which are either indicated or assumed in the New Testament, we arrive at a total of twelve. He appears to His Mother; to Mary Magdalen; to the holy women; to the disciples at Emmaus; to St. Peter; to the Apostles in the absence of Thomas; to the Apostles with Thomas present; at Lake Tiberias; on Mount Thabor; to St. James the Less; to many before the Ascension, and to

St. Paul. Of these twelve appearances six occur at Easter.

His repeated manifestations immediately after the Resurrection were in agreement with His promise (*tertia die resurgam*) and with the necessity of encouraging His utterly disheartened disciples. Once this had been accomplished, there was no further need of showing Himself so frequently.

However, we may infer from John xx, 30 and Acts i, 3 that He appeared more frequently during the forty days than is recorded.

b) There seems to be no doubt that the Lord observed a certain sequence in His apparitions. In general they were determined by the varying degree of merit and the disposition of those favored, and primarily by the faithfulness evidenced during His suffering. Therefore, He appears first of all to the Mother of Sorrows, who had shared all His grief and pain, then to Mary Magdalen and the pious women, who so loyally persevered with Him, and then only to Peter and the rest, who had doubted Him; moreover, He shows Himself first to individuals, then to groups, and finally to all His faithful followers at once.

III. NATURE OF THE APPARITIONS

1) Preparation. Jesus does not appear suddenly and abruptly, but He prepares the hearts for His presence—the women by the apparitions of the Angel, the dis-

ciples through the women and by showing Himself to individuals (Peter). This was particularly necessary in the case of the disheartened disciples. Therefore, He prepares them by sending them His greetings through the women, reminds them by the Angel of His promise, attaches Himself to the disciples on their way to Emmaus as a stranger, enlightens them, and then only reveals Himself to them.

"Non simul omnibus se manifestabat, ut sereret fidei semina. Nam qui primo viderat et certus erat, aliis referebat. Deinde sermo prodiens praeparabat animum auditoris visioni. Et ideo primo digniori et fideliori omnibus apparuit. Erat enim opus animae fidelissimae, quae prius acciperet hunc aspectum, ut minime turbaretur inopinata visione" (St. Chrysostom).

Therein lies an important lesson for us. If the Lord is to reveal Himself to us in a special manner, we must be in the right mood. Why do we often derive such scant comfort, so little of the sense of His nearness and presence in Communion and at Holy Mass? Because we have not prepared ourselves, because we are not in the right mood. On the way to church we should think of where we are going, and for what purpose, and we should also prepare others well.

2. Adaptation. The Lord shows Himself to each one in a manner compatible with his own disposition and condition. To His Mother in her chamber, to the weeping Magdalen at the tomb, to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, to the eleven in the room, to the seven on the shore of the lake, to the five hundred on the moun-

tain, etc. Now He appears as a gardener, then as a pilgrim, again as a fisherman, and so forth.

The Resurrection was to be revealed in the manner in which, in general, the divine is made comprehensible to men, namely, by adaptation to their nature and weakness.

It was necessary for the Lord to heed the mood and condition of soul in which His faithful disciples were at the time. He displays in a beautiful manner His kind, pedagogic adaptation to their weaknesses.

Thus His grace also adapts itself to the moods of the soul and attaches itself to what it finds there.

3. Loveliness. These manifestations of the risen Christ are the most beautiful scenes in the Gospels. Never did His love show itself so palpably as on these occasions.

How delicate the scene with Magdalen; how cordial the *Avete* He offers the women; how benevolent and condescending His bearing towards the disciples at Emmaus; how lovely He is towards the eleven in the room; how considerate and sparing towards Thomas; how companionable on the shores of Lake Tiberias; how gracious and elevating on the Mountain! He dims and softens the radiance of His glorification, lest they be frightened; He casts over it, for the time being, the pilgrim's garb, until they are filled with warmth towards Him; He speaks words of most gracious benevolence: "*Nolite timere! Quid timidi estis?*" To their doubting, timid mind He offers all proofs: *Videte manus.*" "*Habetis aliquid, quod manducetur?*" "*Pueri, numquid pulmentarium habetis?*" "*Infer digitum!*" He clothes

His reproach in words of kind forbearance. All of this renders these scenes so marvelously fragrant, refreshing, and elevating.

And all of this the Master does after their infidelity and denial and flight and doubts! Naught can weaken His love.

Here we, too, may learn how kind and loving a Master we have. For the Lord has not changed. He is still the same. *"Jesus Christus heri et hodie, ipse et in saecula"* (Hebr. xiii, 8). In spite of our weaknesses and pitiful pettiness we may entrust ourselves unhesitatingly to Him.

IV. THE FIGURE OF THE RISEN CHRIST

According to the evangelists the risen Lord appears in different guises and repeatedly in such manner that the disciples do not at first recognize Him, as in the case of the two journeying to Emmaus.

1. Most theologians assume that Jesus did not in reality alter His figure and features, although He could have done so, but that the change lay entirely in the subjectively different impression He made on those who beheld Him. *"In potestate eius erat,"* writes St. Thomas, *"ut ex eius aspectu formaretur in oculis intuentium vel forma gloriosa vel non gloriosa vel mixta. Modica tamen differentia sufficit ad hoc, quod aliquis videatur in aliena effigie apparere."*

Suarez also finds it appropriate to assume that Christ remained unaltered and that the difference was in the impression He made on the beholder. The Gos-

pel itself seems to suggest this when it declares: *"Oculi autem eorum tenebantur, ne eum agnoscerent"* (Luc. xxiv, 16).

St. Augustine (*De cons. evang.*, c. XXV) advances a strange opinion. He thinks the varied impressions were caused by a sort of fluid in the eyes of the disciples, and attributes this to the Devil, lest Christ, as it were, be made the author of a deception.

2. But the Lord evidently acted with full purpose and intent. He wished to adapt Himself to the mood of each individual. His aim was, first of all to awaken anew faith, hope, and charity, to predispose the soul to receive the grace of His apparition with profit and in the proper frame of mind. Therefore, He reveals Himself to some immediately, to some more quickly than to others in His own figure and presence, while He makes Himself known only gradually to others. St. Gregory says quite correctly (*Hom. in Evang.*, 23): *"Talem se exhibuit eis in corpore, qualis apud illos erat in mente,"* and again: *"Quia adhuc in eorum cordibus peregrinus erat a fide, se ire longius finxit."*

3. It was an easy matter for Him to produce different impressions in different individuals. He needed, as St. Thomas has it, but to effect a different *species impressa* in each case. To this must be added the circumstance that, as it seems, the Lord wore a different garment on each occasion, suitable to the respective rôle He played. A still more simple explanation is a change of facial expression, which is readily achieved.

Thus it depends on the state of our mind and heart whether the Lord appears more or less plainly to us.

V. MANIFESTATIONS IN TIMES TO COME

The appearances of the risen Saviour are a symbol of the converse of Our Lord with the souls whom even now He visits and makes happy by His graces and consolations.

1. He always remains near them invisibly, and they know that He is present. This consciousness has a beneficent influence on them and renders the poor cell, the humble church, cozy and dear to them.

From time to time, however, He appears visibly as it were, *i. e.*, He bestows special consolation and enlightenment, gives sensible proofs of His love, and binds the tie of sacred friendship more intimately and firmly.

2. However, He reveals Himself only from time to time, according to merit and need; absents Himself occasionally for a longer period; even at Holy Communion He permits the faithful to remain cold and insensitive, because they have rendered themselves unworthy of the special grace of His tangible presence by a lack of whole-heartedness, by lukewarmness and faults.

3. He appears unexpectedly, frequently at hours when no one thinks of Him; He comes and goes without permitting Himself to be called or detained, in order to show His followers that His favors are purely voluntary dispensations of grace and not due to any merit of theirs.

4. Commonly He remains but a short while, regard-

less of how eager men may be to detain Him. They must understand that the time of lasting companionship with Him has not yet arrived.

5. He appears at different places and on various occasions: in the garden, on the road, in the meeting-room, at the lake, on the mountain.

6. He frequently appears in His full glory (to Mary), often, however, permitting Himself to be recognized only gradually (Emmaus), all in accordance with the disposition of the respective souls. How strangely different are His mystical approaches and visitations in the case of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Teresa, St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Stanislaus!

7. He prepares the soul for His arrival by an announcement. He desires that men make ready for His coming, establish the proper frame of mind, await Him with longing. True, He sometimes reveals Himself to unworthy souls, entirely apart from the question of disposition. As a rule, however, the soul should be prepared.

8. Woe to the priest to whom the Lord no longer discloses Himself in proofs of His presence and particular love! That is a sign that he is outside the circle of the particular friends and confidants on whom the Lord deigns to bestow special proofs of His favor, of which those standing without have not even an inkling.

9. While the risen Saviour reveals to His small flock the full wealth of His kindness and love, hardness of heart still reigns in Jerusalem, and the bulk of the peo-

ple are dominated by a dull apathy or antipathy. Hence, the present condition of the world must not confuse us. The masses will always, at least seemingly, be hostile or indifferent to the Church.

V. "DESCENDED INTO HELL"

I. CHRIST IN THE NETHER WORLD

THIS mystery is possibly understood too little in its full significance. Yet it is so important that it has been incorporated as a dogma in the Apostles' Creed.

1. Hell here signifies the nether world. The Anglo-Saxon "hel" and the Old High German "hella" had the same meaning. Before the coming of Christ, the dying were believed to go down into the lower regions, the land of night and the shades of the dead.

Even the just did not on their deathbed enjoy the happy prospect of soon seeing the countenance of God; they too must pass through an exile in the nether world, a sort of Purgatory, even after atoning for their guilt. Here our first parents and the Patriarchs met—those imposing figures that, like the peaks of the tallest mountains, loom out of the darkness of ancient times; and Moses and David, and many other famous men, down to Zacharias, Simeon, and Joseph.

2. It was wholly in conformity with the idea of salvation that its first fruit should bless these just men of the Old Testament who had looked forward to the coming of the promised Redeemer and had sighed for it through long centuries. The Jewish people have, on the whole, turned away from Him; but they have, in

the course of their history, produced some marvelous figures. It is they the Messias gathers about Himself. He appears to them first, because they are in greatest need of consolation.

3. At last the hour of their liberation has struck. They gaze upon the King of Glory, the mighty Samson, who has broken down the gates; the new Moses, who is to lead them out of long servitude and exile into the promised land. A happy sigh of relief runs through the nether world, an unspeakably joyful acclaim hails the Messias, the Lion of Juda, the King of Peace.

Ave, Salvator noster! It is the paschal Alleluia in the tomb! At this moment all suffering, all grief, all sorrow of the long, painful imprisonment are forgotten. Complaints are stilled and joyously the *"Benedixisti, Domine, terram tuam: avertisti captivitatem Jacob"* (Ps. lxxxiv, 2) resounds.

"Non est lingua in mundo tam eloquens, tam copiosa, quae posset laetitiam Patrum istorum digne satis commemorari." (Louis de Granada).

The Lord had praised the act of visiting prisoners as a work of mercy (Matt. xxvii, 36). Now He sets a glorious example of it.

4. How often is this scene repeated in Purgatory, when again and again the hour of liberation strikes for souls and the chant of the Miserere is changed into that of the Alleluia!

From the visit of Christ down to the last day of human history this uninterrupted procession of redeemed, liberated souls from the prison of the nether

world, from Purgatory, into heavenly glory continues, and not a day, not an hour passes but that many, very many begin to celebrate their Easter in Heaven.

This is the fruit of the Passion and Resurrection of Christ.

The thought of the Pasch as a feast of remembrance of the liberation of Israel from the bondage of Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea to the saving shore beyond, is fully realized here. Debora's canticle of praise resounds again and again.

Let us not neglect to follow the example of the Lord by praying for the Poor Souls! Like an angel our prayers will descend and bring comfort, relief, and freedom!

Think of the length of time souls were confined in the nether world! Some have very rigid and stern views regarding the duration of punishment in Purgatory.

5. Some think the descent of Christ into the nether world had for its purpose, among others, to advise the damned of the advent of the Redeemer. They, too, could have been saved; they are in eternal torment through their own fault. We can imagine them crying: "*Iustus es, Domine, et rectum iudicium tuum*" (Ps. cxviii, 137).

6. Pious writers of an earlier day picture the triumphant Saviour as leading the liberated souls into His sepulchre and permitting them to be witnesses of His Resurrection, of the reunion of His glorified soul with His body, of the first act, as it were, of His eternal ascension to the throne. They fall down in adoration of

the Conqueror: *"Ut omne genu flectatur caelestium, terrestrium et infernorum"* (Phil. ii, 10).

II. THE FUTURE RESURRECTION ANTICIPATED

1. It is altogether probable that there is a close connection between the narrative of St. Matthew (xxvii, 52 f.) concerning the resurrection and apparition of the dead and the descent of Jesus into the nether world. Matthew relates: "The graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints that had slept arose, and coming out of the tombs after His Resurrection, came into the holy city and appeared to many." Probably they were chiefly the souls of such as had died recently and were well known. They are the first to bear witness to the Lord's Resurrection. Their appearance neccessarily created a profound impression, and their testimony had a telling effect.

To whom did they appear? There were many just persons in Jerusalem, who had believed in Jesus, but whose faith had been shaken by the *scandalum crucis*. The appearance of the dead was probably directed first to these men and women, thus preparing what was brought to full maturity on Pentecost.

Did these souls come to warn the enemies of Christ? Probably not. Of the latter it might be said: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe if one rise again from the dead" (Luke xvi, 31).

These risen souls are at one and the same time proof and prototype of similar apparitions related in the

history of the Church and the lives of the Saints. Many of us are all too ready to disbelieve and ridicule these stories. Yet we have here a clear proof that God ordains and permits mediation of this kind.

2. In relating the opening of the graves and the appearance of the dead in connection with the death of Christ, St. Matthew summarizes, as he frequently does, all the miraculous happenings accompanying the latter event. However, he separates quite distinctly *surrexerunt* from *exeuntes de monumentis* by the phrase *post resurrectionem eius.* It is evident that *surrexerunt* and *exeuntes* denote simultaneous events; otherwise one would be obliged to assume that these deceased persons came to life at the death of Christ, but remained in their tombs until His Resurrection, which would be absurd, as the purpose of their appearing was to give testimony to the Resurrection. Therefore, they rose from their graves simultaneously with Christ, or after Him, but most assuredly not before Him; for it is established as a dogma that Christ was the first of all the risen, as St. Paul expressly testifies (*primogenitus ex mortuis!* Col. i, 18; cfr. 1 Cor. xv, 20 and Apoc. vii, 5.)

3. That these cases were true resurrections of bodies, and not apparitions of spirits, is evident from the text: "*Multa corpora sanctorum . . . surrexerunt . . . et exeuntes de monumentis post resurrectionem eius venerunt. . . .*"

4. Whether these just persons merely arose *ad tempus* and later died again, or were awakened to the eternal life of glory, is a subject of controversy. In favor of

the first view it is contended that the purpose was merely to testify to the Resurrection of Christ; that the resurrection of the dead is not to occur until the Day of Judgment, and that, if these persons had so arisen, they would have ascended into Heaven with Christ, of which, however, the Evangelists make no mention. Many others hold the second view, favoring a permanent resurrection. The Lord, they contend, thus showed immediately at His Resurrection, by the example of a few, what He will do for all the just at the end of time.

VI. THE APPARITIONS IN JUDEA

1. "O QUEEN OF HEAVEN, REJOICE!"

I. The Fact

a) THE *sensus catholicus* accepts it as an established fact that the risen Lord appeared first to His Mother. This belief finds joyous expression in the *"Regina caeli"* and other beautiful hymns. The right order of things and filial devotion demand that this be so. If the Lord remembers His holy Mother lovingly in His last agony, how could He forget her in His glory and fail to share the cup of His bliss first of all with her, who drank with Him the chalice of suffering to the very dregs, as no one else. Who receives the first greeting and blessing of the newly ordained priest on his greatest of days? Most assuredly his mother, particularly if she is alone in the world. Hence, it seems to be a matter of course that the risen Saviour extended His first Easter greeting to His mother and she was the first to share in His transfiguration and joy.

"Dignum erat, ut matrem prae ceteris visitaret et de resurrectione sua prius lactificaret, quae prae ceteris plus dilexit, eius amore desiderio plus afficiebatur, plus de eius morte doluit, plus dolore afflicta eius resurrectionem exspectavit" (Ludolphus of Saxony.)

b) True, the Evangelists make no mention of this manifestation, and Mark even declares expressly that the Lord appeared first to Mary Magdalen (Mark xvi, 9). This objection was replied to as early as the twelfth century by the Benedictine Rupert of Deutz: *"Quodsi id idcirco verum non videretur, quia nullus Evangelistarum scriptis hoc attestatur, consequens est, quod nunquam post resurrectionem suam visus sit matri, quia quando vel ubi apparuerit illi, nullus eorum dixit. Sed absit hoc ab illo, qui in lege sua patrem et matrem honorare praecepit, absit inquam, ut matrem propter se doloris gladio transverberatam tam dura negligentia talis filius inhonoraverit."* (*De div. off.*, l. vii, c. 25).

Rupert rightly argues that the Evangelists report only those apparitions which served to give evidence of the Resurrection and thus were intended for the benefit of the entire Church. And here Mary Magdalen was to to be the first witness. The Evangelists omit to mention many other facts concerning which we should like to be informed, and they assuredly need not record what is self-understood.

c) Moreover, the circumstance that almost all the earlier Fathers are silent on this point, is explained by the very fact that they commented on the words of Holy Writ. St. Ambrose says explicitly: *"Vidit ergo Maria resurrectionem Domini et prima vidit et credidit"* (*De Virg.*, l. iii). The poet Sedulius sings: *"Huius [Virginis] se visibus adstans—Luce palam Dominus prius obtulit, ut bona mater—Grandia divulgans miracula, quae fuit olim—Advenientis iter, hacc sit redeuntis et index."*

d) The Middle Ages took over this view from early Christianity. St. Anselm discourses on it very explicitly (*De excell. B. Virg.*, c. 6).

St. Ignatius Loyola also zealously champions this view. He is so concerned with safeguarding Our Lady's honor that at this juncture he digresses from his accustomed method of advancing point by point and enters upon a disputation declaring: "He appeared first to the Virgin Mary. Although this is not explicitly stated in Holy Scripture, one nevertheless considers it as having been said along with other things, since it is reported that He appeared also to many others. For the Scriptures presuppose that we have reasonable understanding, as is written: 'Are ye too without understanding?'" (Spiritual Exercises, Mysteries, Fourth Week).

II. The Apparition

Saintly souls pause in profound admiration over this scene.

a) The Preparation. St. Ignatius invites the meditating soul to seek out the house "into which Our Lady had withdrawn after the burial of her Son" and to ponder "the lonesomeness of Our Lady under the stress of such great pain and woe" (Sp. Ex., Third Week, 6th and 7th Day). In truth, the Mother of Sorrows has passed through a frightful ordeal. Her heart is still fluttering, her eyes are still red, her soul has not yet mastered its pain; the sword has probed it too deeply.

Only if one could fathom the depths of her mother-love, could one measure the intensity of her anguish.

But the firm hope that she will see Him again lives in her heart. She has not forgotten His prediction: "On the third day . . .," as have the others. She knows that the tomb cannot hold Him. She spent a sleepless night, and the early dawn of the third day finds her wrapped in fervent prayer. She did not go to the sepulchre with the other women, for she knows He has no need of ointments and spices, that worms and corruption have no part in this sacred body, that He will rise from the dead.

She has adorned her little chamber, has placed flowers on the window-ledge, has put on a festive garment. Thus she sits or kneels, praying, longing, hoping, somewhat as she had done thirty-three years earlier in quiet Nazareth.

b) The Coming of the Lord. Suddenly the chamber is filled with a brilliant light, as that other chamber was when Gabriel came. But this time the visitor is not a mere angel. Jesus, her Divine Son, stands before her in supernatural glory and beauty. *"Venit Dominus Jesus in albissimis vestibus gloriae et resurrectionis novitatis suae, vultu sereno, speciosus, gloriosus et gaudens . . . totus festivus"* (Ludolphus of Saxony). We can imagine we hear His clear voice saying: *"Ave, Mater carissima!"* Ah, that voice, the sound of which she knows so well! Ah, the sweet word "Mother," which she has not heard for so long! It sounds sweeter than the most charming melodies in her ear.

With a cry of joy she casts herself at the feet of Jesus, raising her outspread arms up to Him. Jesus lifts her up, embraces her, and presses her to His heart. And now these two incomparable hearts again rest near each other. All sorrow is transformed into sadness. A happy rejoicing of the soul, a Magnificat with its own, unique Alleluia. The sweetest Easter joy, resounding with tones of silvery clearness in the *"Regina caeli!"*

"Exsurrexi et adhuc sum tecum" (Ps. cxxxviii, 18).

"It is enough for me, if my son . . . be yet living" (Gen. xlv, 28).

"My spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Saviour" (Luke i, 47).

Mary gazes upon Him again and again with her pure, glistening eyes, and cannot slake her thirst for His glorified beauty. His figure is so noble, so pure, so youthful, fresh, and vigorous, clothed in a snow-white alb, falling in soft gentle folds. The head, which in death had fallen to His chest, is now held erect. His hair, then a maze of disheveled, blood-stained strands, is a wealth of fragrant locks, soft as silk, flowing down from brow to shoulders, framing His incomparably beautiful countenance. His brow, darkly overcast and torn in bloody shreds during the Passion by the tangle of thorns, now gleams bright and fresh as a sunlit mountain-peak. His eyes, broken in death, now glow like an entire heaven full of happiness and blissful beatitude. The hands which, pierced by the nails, had fallen weakly to His side as He lay on her knees, now

enfold her own in tenderness and beauty. Only one memorial of the bitter Passion remains: the marks of the five wounds! But they, purple tinted, are as roses in His hands and feet and as a precious ruby in His side!

c) And now Mother and Son sit side by side in cordial intimacy and engage in sweet converse.

"Postea consedentibus eis pariter curiose intuebatur eundem in vultu et cicatricibus per totum, diligenter quaerens, si omnis poena transisset et omnis dolor ab eo discessisset. O quanto gaudio mater impletur, cum ipsa natum impassibilem intuetur, non solum in aeternum victurum, sed et caelo et terra omnique creaturae perenni jure dominaturum! Stant igitur et colloquuntur ad invicem gaudentes et Pascha delectabiliter et amanter ducentes" (Ludolphus of Saxony).

"Gustare dulcedinem!" Consider the joy of the mother, who sees her son, for whom she has suffered and prayed so much, standing at the altar for the first time in bright vestments! Think of the Alleluia her heart is chanting!

We may well assume that on this occasion, or at some other time during the forty days, Jesus explained to His Mother the rôle she was henceforth to play in His Church, namely, that of nurturing the young Church, of being a support and comfort to it, as a second Eve and "mother of all the living" (Gen. iii, 20). And she accepts this rôle just as she had accepted that other, of becoming the Mother of Christ, with the words: *"Ecce ancilla Domini . . .* !"

II. THE HOLY WOMEN ON THEIR WAY TO THE TOMB

I. Preparation

An honorable burial among the Jews included bathing of the body, embalming it with spices, wrapping the head with a cloth, wrapping the body with linen, entombment, and, finally, the closing of the sepulchre with a rock. At the death of Jesus these things were prepared, ready for use. Since Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus undoubtedly brought their servants with them and possibly some soldiers lent a helping hand, what was essential could well be done in a short time. At any rate everything had to be done quickly. Therefore, the holy women who were present decided to supply all that remained undone after the Sabbath.

Who were these holy women? Express mention is made of Mary Magdalen, Mary Salome, the mother of the two "sons of thunder," Mary, the mother of James the Less and of Joseph (Matt. xxvii, 56; Mark xv, 40; Luke xxiv, 10); further, Joanna, probably the one named in Luke viii, 3, wife of Herod's steward Chusa. The others are not named, but identified as those who had once followed the Lord in Galilee and had ministered unto Him out of their substance (Matt. xxvii, 55; Mark xv, 41); they are the same who stood under the cross on Golgotha, who saw the tomb in which His Body was laid, and prepared spices and ointments for its entombment (Luke xxiii, 55–56).

They were the women who had presented their sons

to Him, who were related to or friends of Mary, whom He had relieved of evil spirits or diseases (Luke viii, 2 ff.), or who, in faithful devotion, had attached themselves to Him as disciples, who had not allowed themselves to be estranged from Him by the Passion, but had remained faithful even after His death. They form a sort of community, held together by the bond of their common love for Jesus.

These pious women play a prominent part in connection with the mysteries of the Resurrection. On the morning of the Resurrection they hold the foreground of the stage and are honored by Our Lord with particular love and favor.

We may admire in them, in their preparations for the walk to the tomb of the Master, certain qualities, as follows:

a) The conscientious obedience with which they observe the rest prescribed for the Sabbath, regardless of the urge impelling them to prepare everything for their pilgrimage to the sepulchre. "On the Sabbath day they rested, according to the commandment" (Luke xxiii, 56).

b) They display great generosity. Woman is more generous than man and does not stint where the object of her love is concerned. "And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalen and Mary, the mother of James, and Salome brought sweet spices, that coming they might anoint Jesus" (Mark xvi, 1). Joseph of Arimathea had already provided the finest linens and Nicodemus a hundred pounds of aloes and myrrh (John xix, 39). But what had been done in enforced haste did not

satisfy these women. They wished to embalm the Sacred Body still more carefully and to fill the tomb from top to bottom with the scent of choice spices. Nothing is too costly where the beloved Master is concerned. Here woman's solicitous, practical love is well exemplified.

Compare with this the generous love and solicitude of women for the decoration of our churches, and particularly of the altar and the tabernacle (altar societies, floral societies, mission circles, etc.).

II. The Women on the Way to the Tomb

a) Their zeal. They arise before dawn and in holy impatience can scarcely await the morning; the first graying of the skies finds them on their way (John xx, 1; Luke xxiv, 1; Mark xvi, 2). We must assume that they walked in two groups, Mary Magdalen being the leader of the first. Since, as Josephus relates, gardens were laid out beyond the walls of the city, cut by ditches and fenced, one can readily understand how the two groups could lose contact with each other. Thus a number of apparent contradictions found in the Evangelists are easily solved.

In our days, who is it that before daybreak, when it is still dark, arises and hastens through gloomy streets, through wind and rain, snow and ice, to the tomb, *i. e.*, to the tabernacle, to early mass, to the Lord's table? It is the pious women. Out of every ten persons attending early weekday mass, eight are women.

The visiting Sister has watched all night at the bedside of a poor patient. But before she returns home in

the morning, she finds her way to church, attends Mass, and receives Holy Communion.

b) Courage and perseverance. The walk is not entirely free from danger, and women are timid by nature. An uncanny frame of mind has taken hold of the city. The enemies of Jesus are not idle. And at the tomb there is a guard—soldiers, ruffians. A heavy stone closes the door to the sepulchre. "Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" In spite of doubts and hesitation the pious women, probably encouraged by the fiery Magdalen, are not frightened from their purpose. They ignore discomfort and danger, and steadfastly pursue their way to the sepulchre, which lies at a considerable distance beyond the walls of the city.

III. The Women's Frame of Mind

a) *"Ut ungerent Jesum"* is given as the principal object of this early morning journey. Since anointing and embalming was a part of every honorable burial, the intention of the women did not necessarily indicate a lack of faith on their part in the incorruptibility of the body of the Lord. They may have recalled the Master's words: "Let her [Magdalen] alone, that she may keep it against the day of my burial" (John xii, 7). However, their faith does not yet seem perfectly clarified. Their spirit is confused by the terrible events, and evidently they have wholly forgotten Christ's words regarding His Resurrection on the third day. They seek the Living Christ among the dead, they wish to con-

serve immortality with balm. *"Corpus Christi erat deitate inbalsamatum et ideo, si per decem milia annorum in terra latuisset, non potuisset putrefieri"* (Ludolphus of Saxony.) But if the action of the women was not wholly correct, their intention was good. The scent of the spices was sweet, but sweeter still was the perfume of their love. Hence their reward did not fail them.

b) Their frame of mind is also revealed by their worry concerning the stone. Possibly they knew nothing of the guard; at any rate they revealed no anxiety on that score. But there is the stone, which Nicodemus and his men had with great exertion rolled before the opening, to protect the grave against desecration! They think, as we so frequently do, of naught but their own strength, which naturally did not suffice, and consequently they are troubled. They overlook that God is interested in this matter and will do His share. And so everything happens in a manner utterly different from what they had expected, much better than they had thought.

How often do we not think and act similarly when we are dispirited!

c) What does Our Lord think of it? He may have smiled; for although many imperfections accompanied the action of the women, their heart and their intention were good. That is what He considers; in that He rejoices. The holy women could not carry out their intention of anointing His body; but He accepts their good will for the deed, lovingly disregards the accidental imperfections in their conduct, and rewards the spices

intended for Him with a spiritual anointing, with a consolation transcending everything in sweet fragrance.

Therein lies vast comfort for us. Jesus, who is ever the same, looks upon the essence of our thought and our intention and frame of mind, and loves us in spite of the pettiness of our efforts.

IV. *The Surprise at the Sepulchre*

a) The sun having risen in the meantime, the women see from afar that the tomb is open and the stone has been rolled away. What has happened? The while the others, frightened, begin to walk more slowly, Magdalen storms ahead, finds the sepulchre actually open—to her mind broken open violently—and without investigating further, hastens on her way to bear the alarming news to the two Apostles Peter and John: "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre and we know not where they have laid Him" (John xx, 2). In her excitement and haste she has not seen the angel sitting in the antechamber of the tomb.

The firm expectation of finding the tomb inviolate was based on the fact that the family sepulchre of a noble house was protected by law, while the burial had been performed by sanction of public authority. The opening of the tomb and the removal of the body, therefore, appeared to Magdalen, who did not wait to hear the angel's explanation, as the work of Christ's enemies.

b) While Magdalen hastened back to Jerusalem by the nearest and quickest route, the other women ap-

proached the tomb timidly, uneasy with hope, fear and worry. They are more careful and take a good look at the grave. The body is no longer there. The linens lie folded on the ground. The women are struck speechless by the unexpected discovery.

Now they have no use for their flasks and pots, their efforts and expenditures have been in vain! But the thought of this does not occur to them. Everything is crowded into the background by the question: "Where is the Lord?" There is no evidence of violence. The cloths are carefully folded. The thought of the Resurrection does not enter their mind. Astonishment, helplessness, sorrow fill their throbbing hearts.

Might we not expect the Lord to have pity on them and appear to them here at the tomb? He does not. They are not yet prepared, not yet in the proper frame of mind to receive this grace to advantage. For this reason the Lord sends them His messengers, the holy angels.

III. THE ANGELS AT THE SEPULCHRE

I. *Their Appearance*

To the guards the angel appears as a flash of lightning, hurling them to the ground; to the pious women as a lovable figure, clothed in a luminous white alb, the vestment of joy. The guards, overcome by terror, fall to the ground; the women are encouraged and comforted. Thus, too, it will be at the last judgment.

The angels, who throughout the life of Our Lord,

at the Annunciation, the Birth, on the Mount of Olives, appear as messengers and comforters, now become heralds of the Resurrection.

They stand at the tomb as a guard appointed by God. If they were there, how can they fail to be present as a guard of honor at the tabernacle? They kneel there unseen, adoring, as Christian art reminds us time and again.

As if to make the scene more peaceful, there are two angels, the deacon and subdeacon, as it were, at a solemn high Mass.

II. What Do They Say?

a) They offer encouragement: "Fear not you!" (Matt. xxviii, 5). Thus they once spoke to Zacharias, to Mary, to the shepherds. That is the true celestial greeting: *Pax! Nolite timere!* Fear is earthly, hope and confidence are celestial.

b) They offer information: You think only of humanity, of death and the grave; but He is also God, who does not die. You seek Jesus of Nazareth. Very well! But you seek Him, who liveth, among the dead. That is wrong. "He is risen, He is not here!" (Mark xvi, 6).

You are amazed; but did not the Master clearly predict what would occur? "Remember how He spoke unto you, when He was yet in Galilee, saying: The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and the third day rise again" (Luke xxiv, 6–7).

c) They bear a message. You think only of yourselves. Go and carry the joyous message to the Apostles. "Going quickly tell ye His disciples that He is risen!" (Matt. xxviii, 7).

III. The Impression

The first impression caused by the appearance of the angels is fear. "But they going out fled from the sepulchre, for a trembling and fear had seized them; and they said nothing to any man, for they were afraid" (Mark xvi, 8).

Afraid because it all happened so unexpectedly, because in every instance the sudden projecting of the supernatural into the natural life frightens man.

But soon they have recovered from their first fright and think of what they have heard. "*Et recordatae sunt verborum ejus*" (Luke xxiv, 8). They recall the Lord's prediction. Now they suddenly begin to understand. Joyfully they realize: Sure enough, that is what He said; it must be true! And they are filled with joy. "And they went out quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy, running to tell His disciples" (Matt. xxviii, 8). They could not wait, they must bear the good news to Sion.

How naïvely the report of the Evangelists is formulated, and yet, how wholly it conforms to woman's character, with its quick and strange change and blending of emotions. Entirely in harmony therewith is their hesitancy, whether or not to carry out the commission entrusted to them. As long as they are not clear in their

own mind, they say nothing to anyone. Then, however, they hasten to deliver the message.

IV. PETER AND JOHN AT THE TOMB

I. Peter's Frame of Mind

Peter had passed through days of sadness. In spite of the warnings and admonitions of the Master, the dark night of suffering had come upon him with the suddenness of an avalanche and had utterly crushed him. Add thereto his disgraceful fall, remembrance of which causes the blood to freeze in his arteries.

True, he was saved from despair by the merciful glance of the Saviour. But the gory death and the burial of the Master! Peter feels as though an unbridgeable chasm separates him from Jesus; he seems to stand at its brink, not knowing what to do, glancing across longingly, but without hope of ever seeing Him again. Poor Peter! His heart is a mass of wounds inflicted by self-reproach! "I know not the man"—he hears his own voice constantly repeating within him. He could tear out the tongue that spoke those terrible words!

He recalls all the admonitions of the Master, replete with love and serious import, and their literal fulfilment; thinks of all the Master was to him. Not till now has he fully realized or accurately measured his own attachment to the Master and what He meant to him. And now, all is lost!

The tragic events on Golgotha, the mystery of the Passion, have stunned him like a blow on the head.

Love still remains, love deep and sincere; but it only intensifies his pain.

Into this gloomy, depressing frame of mind flashes like lightning the message brought by Mary Magdalen.

II. The Message of Mary Magdalen

Magdalen hastens to Peter and John (John xx, 2),—which proves that the Apostles no longer were together, but had separated into groups. One can understand why Peter should have attached himself to John. For John was with Mary, and we can readily perceive that Peter, with his burden of guilt and sorrow, should turn to the Mother of his Master. Moreover, the two Apostles had previously been greatly devoted to each other. They had been sent by the Lord to prepare for the Pasch (Luke xxii, 8), and the scene at the Last Supper, after the betrayal had been announced, reveals how intimate was their companionship (John xiii, 23 ff.). Both are also devoted to the Lord with a sincere love, and this love forms a bond between them. Undoubtedly John had told Peter everything he had witnessed at the Passion, even to the smallest detail. A heavy depression hovers over them. John, too, has forgotten Christ's prophecy of His Resurrection. What now?

Then suddenly Magdalen comes in breathless haste, gasping the message: "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him" (John xx, 2). The news comes like a thunder-clap. What had happened? Something new,

unusual is afoot. Without a moment's loss they hasten to the sepulchre to make sure of the facts.

III. Peter and John Hasten to the Tomb

a) The circumstance that Peter and John, on hearing Magdalen's simple tale, immediately hasten to the tomb, proves that they are not so wrapped in doubt as are the others. At any rate they wish to ascertain the facts for themselves.

That is the proper course to pursue in similar cases. We should not lose time in arguing, but should hasten to the scene of the occurrence and investigate.

b) *"Currunt."* Love lends wings to their feet. John, unconscious of guilt, hastens ahead with a lighter and more youthful stride; Peter follows more slowly, as befits a maturer man. Perhaps, too, Peter's steps are a bit hesitant, a bit timid, by reason of his consciousness of weakness and guilt.

"Currunt Apostoli, currunt Magdalena et sociae eius, omnes currunt ad quaerendum Dominum, cor suum, animan suam. Currunt multum fideliter, multum ferventer, multum anxie et studiose. Curre et tu cum eis, ut et cum eis consolari merearis!" (Ludolphus).

c) John remains at the tomb, hesitating to enter, possibly from fear and anticipation of some attack by the enemies of the Master, possibly also out of reverence for Peter's age and office, to which he wishes to allow precedence.

Peter enters courageously, and John follows.

Pastor and assistant priest! The latter, being more

youthful, is occasionally readier for action and hurries ahead of the latter; but he remembers that the pastor has precedence and that investigation of any matter is his first right and function. Such reverence for the dignity and experience of age is beautiful.

IV. What They Found

a) They see no angel, nor have they need of one after having heard Magdalen's message. They must depend on their own judgment and convince themselves by what they see. This must suffice both to reassure them and to fan their desire for the Lord into flame.

b) The entire occurrence illustrates the characteristic difference between the course of action of man and woman. Man inspects closely, examines details and circumstances, deliberates, and draws his conclusions. The two Apostles immediately find everything confirmed that Magdalen has told them—the stone has been rolled away, the tomb is empty.

Reasoning man sees more. He ascertains that the linen wrappings and the head-cloth are not heedlessly bundled and left in a heap, but lie neatly folded apart. He concludes from this that Mary Magdalen has been mistaken in thinking that the body had been carried off. A violation of the grave is out of the question. Robbers would have had neither time nor desire to carefully rearrange the linen cloths, particularly since the unwrapping of these cloths, saturated as they were with spices, would have required considerable time and

labor. They would rather have carried away the body precisely as it was. Everything points to deliberate and reverential action, not to nervous haste. Thus far everything is clear. Both disciples are deeply moved.

V. The Effect

a) The conclusion is self-evident: Therefore He must have risen from the dead. The words of the Lord must have almost forced themselves upon them. But for the time being they fail to arrive at a clear understanding of it all. And although it is written of John: He "came to the sepulchre, and he saw and believed" (John xx, 8), this must probably not be understood as signifying a complete realization of all that had happened, for the very next sentence declares: "For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead" (John xx, 9).

In these words the Evangelist offers an explanation of the strange, vacillating attitude of the Aposties. The meaning of the text is undoubtedly this: We did not for a moment think that Jesus must rise from the dead, as the prophets and He Himself had prophesied. We were too utterly confused and thought only of what was immediately before our eyes—His death and entombment. These impressions lay like heavy dark clouds on the landscape of their souls. Possibly they also wish to say, they did not arrive at faith in the Resurrection by reflection on the Messianic prophecies, which became clear only in the light of their fulfilment, but only by what they saw—*"vidit et credidit."*

One thing is certain: They did not find Him, as the two disciples of Emmaus correctly report (Luke xxiv, 24). They are mystified. Evidently the body has not been stolen; but where is it?

b) "The disciples therefore departed again to their home" (John xx, 10). Peter "went away, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass" (Luke xxiv, 12). Probably they then separated and went home; but at any rate they were filled with utterly different emotions. John, whose vision was later to prove its keenness at the lake, was filled with joyful hope, while Peter was still a prey to contradictory emotions. Joy, hope, pain, and care are warring in his heart. Joy over the first gleam of hope after the darkness of night; hope, that all may yet be well; care, worry, and doubt, whether or not the Lord, if He be indeed risen, will appear to human eyes; pain, because he has made himself so unworthy of the Lord. But slowly does the sun pierce the dark night and dissipate the fog and vapors hovering over hill and vale. In Peter's case there is need of a second message, such as Magdalen will soon deliver.

V. JOHN

There is no record in Holy Writ of a special apparition of the risen Lord to John. It is claimed, there was no need of such an appearance in his case. But that does not satisfy. Jesus appeared to Peter and James, two of the three whom He had favored with special graces;

therefore one can scarcely believe that He should have withheld this mark of His particular favor from him whom "He loved," more especially since John had by His fidelity merited this grace more than all the rest.

John's silence regarding such an appearance is fully explained by his habit of modestly remaining in the background. He alone could have told of it, but he does not. How much else that is choice and beautiful has he withheld from us, as he himself intimates in the closing sentence of his gospel!

Compare with this silence the unwritten chapters of the lives of saints! We have only fragments. Precisely what is most beautiful often remains untold.

It is not improbable that, as some think, John went immediately from the tomb to the Mother of Jesus and there met the Saviour and celebrated Easter with them. John himself remarks after narrating one of the words of Jesus from the cross: "And from that hour the disciple took her to his own" (John xix, 27). No wonder that he should be permitted to share in Mary's joy! In this wise the scene at the cross was repeated with a paschal modification: "Woman, behold thy son! Son, behold thy mother!"

VI. MARY MAGDALEN

I. Magdalen Seeks Jesus

a) Who is she that seeks Jesus so intently? It is the erstwhile sinner (Luke vii, 37), who had fallen to such

depths that she had become the victim of demoniac influences (Mark xvi, 9). Now she surpasses the others in love and faithful devotion.

Since the Lord in His mercy has lifted her out of the abyss, since she has heard the sweet word of forgiveness, she has been utterly changed. She follows the Master everywhere; she is happy only in His presence.

She organizes the group of women for the support of the Lord and His work; follows Him on His apostolic wanderings; sits contented at His feet when He comes to Bethany; listens to His words and can never be surfeited; in short, her life now has but one objective —Jesus!

b) Some individuals are characterized by the head, others by the heart. Learned men, business men belong to the first category. They are exposed to less danger than others.

The others, often distinguished by qualifications touching on genius, poets, artists, distinguished by beauty, charm, rare gifts of mind and body, loved, admired and sought after, commonly have a marked predisposition to good or evil. Frequently they have the good fortune to die young.

But precisely this latter group has produced numerous saints, some of whom never left the right path, while others returned to a life of virtue after a grievous fall.

Magdalen belonged to the latter class. Notwithstanding the flaw attaching to her, she is one of the most charming personages in the Gospel, whose case shows clearly what true love for Christ may accomplish.

Consequently, one should never despair if highly gifted individuals sin grievously. Everything can be righted again if they find their way back to the feet of Jesus. The past, whatever it may have been, is not a bar to becoming a disciple, perhaps even a favorite of Jesus.

c) The Passion begins; the storm scatters the little flock; the Apostles flee. Magdalen remains true to the Master, follows in His steps to the very cross; she hears His last words and is present when His body is placed in the sepulchre.

She is probably responsible for the suggestion to devote more and costlier care to the Saviour's sacred body. She is at the head of the little group which hurries to the tomb at early dawn. From there she brings the news to Peter and John and, following them, returns to the sepulchre. The other pious women are already on their way home; Peter and John also return home—but Magdalen remains—a striking figure of the soul seeking God!

II. Before the Tomb

a) *"Maria autem stabat ad monumentum foris plorans"* (John xx, 11.) Here she had seen the last that remained of Him. And now the tabernacle has been broken open and she stands before it, seeking. But one question, one worry occupies her mind: Where is Jesus? Where can He be?

The presence of the sacred body had consoled her somewhat for the Master's death, had in a measure compensated her for it. But now even this comfort has

been taken from her. The pain of parting seizes upon her with double intensity. *"Et iste dolor major erat, quia nullam consolationem habebat. . . . Perdiderat enim magistrum suum, quem ita singulariter diligebat, ut praeter ipsum nihil posset diligere, nihil posset sperare. Perdiderat vitam animae suae et iam sibi melius arbitrabatur fore mori quam vivere, quia forsitan inveniret moriens, quem invenire non poterat vivens, sine quo tamen vivere non valebat"* (Origen, *Hom. in div. de Maria Magdalena,* 10).

What is she to do? Remain at the tomb or go forth to seek Him? *"Angustiae sunt mihi undique et quid eligam ignoro. Si iuxta monumentum maneo, ego illum non invenio; si a monumento recessero, nescio infelix, quo vadam, nescio, ubi eum quaeram. Discedere a monumento—mors mihi est. Stare ad monumentum—irremediabilis dolor. Melius autem mihi sepulchrum Domini custodire, quam ab eo longius ire. Si enim longius abiero, fortis cum rediero, ipsum sublatum invenio et sepulchrum destructum. Stabo igitur et hic moriar, ut saltem iuxta sepulchrum Domini mei sepeliar"* (Orig., *ib.*).

b) *Stabat.* Thus she stands, her heart ready to burst with emotion, helpless, not knowing what to do. She has but one conscious thought: that she cannot live without Him.

Origen beautifully describes her dreamy mood. "Feeling, she felt not; seeing, she saw not; hearing, she heard not; for she was not where she was, but was wholly there where her Divine Master was, of whom she knew not where He was" (*l.c.*).

And again: *"Oblita erat timere, oblita erat gaudere, oblita erat seipsam, oblita erat denique omnia praeter illum, quem diligebat super omnia . . . Sensus nullus in ea remanserat, omne consilium ab ea perierat, spes omnis defecerat, solummodo flere supererat"* (*l.c.*).

c) *Prospexit.* In spite of everything, however, she does not remain inactive. Once again she enters the sepulchre, hopeful of discovering even a slight trace of Him. She had indeed done that before, but if someone has lost something extremely precious, he will look for it again and again in the same spot. "To one who loves, one look will not suffice; the power of love urges to repeated attempts. She therefore continued to search, and so it came about that she found" (Greg., *Hom. in Evang.*, 25).

But for the time being all her searching is in vain. And now she does what women and children always do in such cases—she surrenders to her grief and allows her tears to flow freely. Tears of pain, tears of longing!

d) *Plorans!* "The eyes which sought the Lord and did not find Him, yield to tears, more because He has been taken from the tomb than because He has died on the cross; since not even a remembrance remained of so great a Master, whose life had been taken from her" (Aug., *Tract. in Ioan.*, 20).

Ludolph of Saxony offers a beautiful remark at this point: *"Maria quidquid voluit, flendo obtinuit, flendo obtinuit veniam peccatorum, flendo obtinuit fratris resurrectionem de faucibus infernorum, flendo obtinuit consolationem de resurrectione. Lacrimas ergo fudit*

compunctionis, compassionis et devotionis" (*Vita Christi,* II, 72).

I too have reason to weep with Magdalen: first, because of my sins, which have robbed me of the friendship of God. This sort of tears Magdalen wept at the feet of the Master. Secondly, I have reason to weep if God withdraws from me unexpectedly and leaves me in darkness and barren of consolation. "My tears have been my bread day and night, whilst it is said to me daily: Where is thy God?" (Ps. xli, 4.) Such are the tears Mary is now weeping at the tomb.

But what is most frequently the cause of our tears? Temporal loss, loss of money, possessions, honor; or at times resentment. How different in the case of Magdalen: "They have taken away my Lord!" That is the sole cause of her pain. Her sorrow is centered wholly about the disappearance of His Body; her sole care is that His rest in the tomb has been disturbed, that His Sacred Body has been dishonored. The Lord is her one and all; her thoughts and aims are turned towards Him, and towards Him exclusively. Everything else is worthless in her eyes. Ah, how glorious are these tears which are shed solely for Christ's sake!

c) The sepulchre is a symbol of the tabernacle. Here, too, the Lord rests as if dead, though by faith we are conscious of His blissful presence. But times may come when it would seem as if He had disappeared, and the God-loving soul seeks Him sorrowing, but finds Him not, when it asks, weeping and pleading: *"Ubi est, quem diligit anima mea?"* The tomb remains silent and gives no answer. And thus, too, the tabernacle. The

soul deems herself forsaken, believes she is far removed from Him, as if He would never return. He stands before her, yet she sees Him not. He says: Why weepest thou? Yet she hears Him not. There is much that is faulty and foolish in such a mood, but one thing is present, profound, true and sincere: the soul's longing for Jesus!

III. The Apparition of the Angels

a) Of a sudden Mary hears a friendly voice, full of sympathy, asking her: "Woman, why weepest thou?" (John xx, 13). She sees two angels in gleaming white garments. And strangely, the apparition neither frightens her nor causes her joy. Under other circumstances the presence of radiant angels would have enraptured her. But now it has no value, no interest for her. What is the appearance of an angel in comparison with Jesus? Thought and desire are for Him alone. The one thought of Him consumes every other interest in her. "Do you see what fills her whole soul? She barely notices that the angels speak to her" (St. Chrysostom). She is indifferent towards everything that is not Jesus.

Ah, what miserable "angels" occasionally draw the priest away from His Lord and Master!

b) Mary merely listens to the angels in order to learn something about Him, and her reply consists in the brief words that express her one great care: "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." That is love above everything, from heart, mind, and soul!

c) "They have taken away my Lord!" The dead body, though mute and lifeless, is her Lord! It was all that remained to her of Jesus; and it was as though He still were present.

Thus, too, the Lord in the tabernacle is mute and lifeless. But for the Magdalen-soul that loves Him, seeks Him there, and knows He is present there, He is the Lord; and were the tabernacle broken and the body removed by theft, such a soul would weep as Magdalen wept at the tomb.

IV. The "Gardener"

a) Paying no further heed to the angels, who, she thinks, cannot help her, she again surrenders utterly to her grief. Nevertheless her senses remain acute, as though on the alert for even the slightest sign of Him.

She hears a trifling noise behind her—footsteps, a rustling in the shrubs and bushes surrounding the tomb.

"She turned herself back and saw Jesus standing; and she knew not that it was Jesus" (John xx, 14).

He occupies the center of her thoughts, yet she thinks only of the dead, not of the living Lord. The latter, she thinks, is far, far away, and so she sees Him and yet does not see Him. Grief renders the seeing blind and those who can hear deaf.

She was under the impression that Jesus was the gardener. One need not think of a disguise. The supposition was natural enough that it was the gardener, whom Joseph of Arimathea had hired to take care of the tomb. Probably the figure was partly concealed by the shrub-

bery, and probably also she gave it but a cursory glance, since it was of no interest to her except as a possible source of information concerning her great concern. She had no suspicion whatever that it might be the Lord.

And the presumptive gardener asks: "Woman why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?" (John xx, 15).

She does not answer. A thought flashes like lightning through her mind. The gardener must surely know what has become of Jesus. Possibly Joseph of Arimathea had instructed him to remove the body to a safe place, to guard against it being stolen. Since the burial had taken place in great haste, the assumption of such a transfer was natural.

All of this seems to lurk behind the hasty words: "Sir, if thou hast taken Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away" (John xx, 15).

Thought and language are exceedingly characteristic of Mary, and marvelously portray her fiery love.

"If thou hast taken Him . . ." She mentions no name; she knows but the one on whom all her thoughts are centered. Everyone must know "Him"; it is peculiar to those who are in love to take for granted that everyone else must know all about their one great affair.

"I will take Him away." But what if He is in the court of the high priest?—I will take Him away. Or in Pilate's castle?—I will take Him away. And if I must break through the lines of a Roman legion, in order to reach Him—I will take Him away. Or if He be on dizzy heights—I will take Him away. Or down unfathomable depths—I will take Him away. *"O inef-*

fabilis huius mulieris amor! O mirabilis mulieris audacia, o mulier non mulier: nullum locum excipit, nullum anteponit, sine timore dicit, absolute promittit: Dicito, ubi posuisti eum, et ego eum tollam" (Origen, *l.c.*).

And what wilt thou do with the body? Where wilt thou place it? All these are secondary queries. If I but had Him! That is the language of true love!

c) Truly, whoever seeks with such burning love, such touching fidelity, deserves to find what he seeks.

Lord, Thou hast tried her enough! Now she is worthy of being shown Thy gracious countenance!

"Dulcis magister, ad quid, quaeso, provocas spiritum huius mulieris, ad quid commoves animam ejus? Tota pendet in te, tota manet in te, tota sperat de te et tota desperat de se. Ita quaerit te, ut quaerens nihil quaerat praeter te. Ideoque forsitan non cognoscit te, quia non est in sese, sed propter te est extra se. Cur ergo dicis: Cur ploras? Quem quaeris? . . . noli quaeso, dulcis magister, illius protrahere desiderium, quia ecce iam triduo sustinet te nec habet quod manducet neque habet unde satiet animam suam esurientem" (Origin, *l. c.*).

This is the seeking Magdalen, a truly human and truly feminine figure, as St. John has painted her with a few masterly strokes. She, too, is confused, without a proper understanding of the mystery of death and redemption. Christ's unmistakable prophecies have for the time being escaped her mind. Incidentals become essentials. She thinks only of anointing the dead body. In her grief she overlooks the angels, aye, the Lord

Himself, standing before her. But the most profound reason for her strange conduct is, notwithstanding everything, love—true, sincere love. And the Lord in His kindness looks at love, at the heart, and is pleased with His disciple.

VII. RABBONI!

I. Recognition

a) Once more Mary Magdalen sits there, burying her face in her hands, lost in dreams and grief. Jesus steps forth; she sees Him not, hears Him not. Now a voice, the sound of which is so well known to her, which is the essence of her bliss, to hear which she never tired, the breaking tones of which she heard for the last time from the cross, falls on her ear like the sound of a bell ringing at dawn.

"Mary!"—what a wealth of meaning in this one word! Thou seekest Me; here I am; knowest thou Me not? Weep not; see, I am alive!

"Mary!"—My most faithful disciple! This one word says more than a thousand volumes! It has a sweeter sound than all the music in the world! It spells the fulfilment of all longing. It means as much as "My Mary, who belongs wholly to Me, who is utterly devoted to Me!" Ah, love in its pure, glorified setting is surpassingly beautiful and holy!

"Mary!"—He calls her by her first name, as is the custom among intimate friends. Assuredly He had ad-

dressed her thus before in Bethany. "Mary hath chosen the best part" (Luke x, 42). She knows this call so well! There is but One who speaks to her thus.

Like an electric current a flood of warmth, happiness, and bliss courses through her being. Quick as a flash she is on her feet, turns, and—sees Him, and the sunlight of a blessed joy gleams through the clouds of her tears. *"Mutatae sunt lacrimae doloris in lacrimas amoris"* (Origen.)

b) A single rapturous cry: *"Rabboni!*—My Master!" and she falls down before Him and violently embraces His feet.

"Rabboni!" This form of address, indicating a bit more than "Lord" and also deep sincerity of emotion, serves Mary to tell all that He is to her: her Master, her Saviour, her sole Hope and Beatitude! He is the content of her life. She has but One on earth whom she loves. In Him she has again found all. *Tu es pars mea in aeternum!* Reverence, love, confidence, joy vibrate in this one word.

"In one first word she empties her whole, full heart" (Stolberg).

She embraces His feet, these feet, at which she had once been tendered so loving a reception, which she had moistened with her tears, dried with her luxuriant hair; these feet, whose frightful, gory wounds she had kissed in unutterable pain on the cross, and which are now adorned so gloriously with the rubies of the transfigured marks. Now she again has Him, to whom her whole heart is attached, and cries with the bride in the

Canticle of Canticles (III, 4): *"Inveni, quem diligit anima mea; tenui eum nec dimittam!"*

c) Ah, what marvelous consoling power lies in the one word spoken by the Saviour! *"Si autem Jesus unum tantum verbum loquitur, magna consolatio sentitur"* (*Imit. Chr.*, II, 8).

In meditating on this scene, we come to understand fully what we read in the lives of saints highly favored by grace, their visions and raptures and mystical experiences of communion with Christ. We realize how closely a soul may approach to Christ, how cordial a relationship may be established. It is an illustration of the mystical *tactus dei*. Thus everything is prefigured in an incomparable ideal patterned in the Gospel.

"Quam dulcis es quaerentibus, sed quid invenientibus?" How will this scene find fulfilment in unbounded reality in Heaven, when finally we shall see Him, whom on earth we followed seeking, longing, weeping, in unveiled beauty and shall fall at His feet with a joyful *Rabboni!*—at last I have found Thee, kind Master!

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

"Quare tristis es, anima mea? et quare conturbas me? Spera in Deo, quoniam adhuc confitebor illi, salutare vultus mei et Deus meus" (Ps. xlii, 5).

II. "Noli Me Tangere"

"Jesus said to her: Do not touch Me, for I am not yet ascended to My Father!" (John xx, 17).

These words have frequently been given a forced and incorrect interpretation, as though the Lord desired to intimate to Magdalen that her love was not sufficiently spiritual, and that therefore she was not worthy to touch His feet.

These conceptions are artificially injected, partly on the strength of the Vulgate translation.

Why should she, converted and tried and proven in fidelity and love, ready for sacrifice, not now be permitted to touch and kiss these feet which were not withheld from her when she was a sinner?

The context excludes this interpretation. For how else can one understand the motivation, "for I am not yet ascended"?

As a matter of fact the word used in the Greek text for *"tangere"* rather signifies "holding firmly to," "keeping hold of" (Μή μου ἅπτου).

b) The meaning of this part of the text then is: Mary, after a painful separation, unexpectedly sees the Lord before her, living and glorified, casts herself at His feet, and embraces them firmly, because she thinks and fears He will disappear as suddenly as He appeared. She wishes to compel Him to remain longer—a natural desire. Or possibly she demands that the Lord take her with Him to that abode which He had promised to prepare for His own in His Father's house, where there shall be no pain of parting (John xiv, 2 ff.).

Thus we understand the Lord's gentle, soothing answer: "Thou needest not seek to hold Me, for as yet I go not from hence; the moment of parting, of My going to the Father, of which I have spoken to thee,

has not yet arrived. I shall remain a while on earth, and thou shalt see Me again. Be content and go, and tell this to the brethren." This is the plain, natural meaning of the words in their context.

c) We act precisely as Magdalen did when, occasionally, after a lengthier period of disconsolateness, the Lord approaches us more closely than otherwise and reveals Himself to us in a comforting manner. Ah, how full of bliss such hours may be! Then one embraces His feet to hold Him fast. Lord, stay with me, do not depart again! And the Master replies: "Do not try to hold Me. The time of our undisturbed, continuous communion has not yet come. It will come only in Heaven."

III. The Message

"But go to My brethren and say to them: I ascend to My Father and to your Father, to My God and your God" (John xx, 17).

a) He makes Mary Magdalen the first messenger of His Resurrection and sends the first Easter greeting to His disciples through her. They are still too disturbed and confused for Him to appear to them immediately in person. Before He may do that, their hearts must grow calmer, their mind clearer; their confidence must first be stirred, their desire aroused.

Mary, therefore, hastens to the disciples, probably to their meeting-place on Sion, where she may well expect to meet at least several of them. Even to this day one senses the hurried breath, the joyful, impetuous haste

of her message: "I have seen the Lord, and these things He said to me" (John xx, 18).

"I have seen the Lord!" What rich content in these few words. Her great suffering had been that He had disappeared, that the Sun had set. Her words breathe the full sweetness of her experience.

How shallow the finest flights of poetic fancy in comparison with these scenes of the Gospel, inimitable in their simplicity! The breath of God is in them.

b) This is the first greeting sent by the Master to His disciples. He wishes to convince them that He harbors no resentment on account of their conduct, that, in spite of their faithlessness, He and they have not been separated.

The words of the message remind one of the intimate conversation at the Last Supper—*Ibo ad patrem!* How clearly He had intimated everything to them on that occasion!

The expression "brethren," too, is worthy of notice. The Lord does not apply this sweet name to His disciples until after the Resurrection. Even before that time He had admitted them to most intimate communion. "*Iam non dicam vos servos. . . . Vos autem dixi amicos*" (John xv, 15). But now He calls them brethren, and that in a most cordial tone.

Their relations, then, have not only not been marred in the least, they have even become more cordial. "*Jesus, quamvis Dominus, vocat eos fratres et caritatis et humilitatis ratione, in qua datur praelatis forma caritatis et humilitatis juxta illud Ecclesiastici* (xxxii, 1):

Rectorem te posuerunt, noli extolli; esto in illis quasi unus ex ipsis" (Ludolphus).

Ah, what a kind Master we have! Does He not treat us in a similar manner when, for instance, during the Spiritual Retreat, in spite of past infidelity, He meets us in a loving manner and permits us to realize that He still regards us as His disciples and that the old relation of particular friendship still endures!

c) To My Father and to your Father! An essential difference, notwithstanding all community and condescension. *"Ad patrem meum, per generationem et naturam, et patrem vestrum, per adoptionem et gratiam"* (Ludolphus).

Only through Jesus did God become our Father in this fullest sense and approach us so closely.

As in His whole life, so here again the Saviour is engaged in constantly leading men to the Father.

IV. "Tenui eum!"

a) From now on there is nothing in the world that can attract and fascinate Mary Magdalen. Jesus is and remains the content of her life till death.

b) More than that! She plays her rôle as a faithful disciple of the Lord through all the Christian centuries; she has lifted up millions by her example; she has become a favorite saint of Christians. The Lord's prophecy concerning her has been literally fulfilled: "Amen, I say to you, wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached

in the whole world, that also which she hath done, shall be told in memory of her" (Matt. xxvi, 13).

c) I, too, have found the Lord again in the Spiritual Exercises, perhaps after a painful search. Now my decision must be: *"Tenui eum nec dimittam!"* But to hold Jesus fast is a great art. *"Magna ars est scire cum Jesu conversari; et scire Jesum tenere magna prudentia"* (*Imit. Chr.,* II, 8). The one great means is the faithful practice of the *"Mecum,"* the journeying and struggling at the Master's side! (Meditation on the Kingdom of Christ in the Spiritual Exercises). Constant spiritual communion with Jesus! As long as He is spiritually near me, all will be well! Therefore, I must again and ever again renew the sacred binding tie, and, although the skies are gloomy and even dark at times, plead, weep, seek, until the Lord shows Himself once more.

VIII. "AVETE!"

I. The Apparition

a) Jesus appears to the women earlier than to the Apostles. During His public life the Apostles stood in the foreground, in immediate proximity to the Lord. The radiance surrounding Him first fell upon them. They felt exalted and almost proud in this privileged position, considered themselves His best friends, and possibly frowned with a bit of contempt upon the "pious women folk" that ranked far, far beneath them.

Then the storm of the Passion breaks, and lo! the rôles are changed. The Apostles disappear in the back-

ground, the women come to the front. Their faithful love follows the Lord beyond death and the tomb. Therefore, they, and not the Apostles, come to be the first witnesses and messengers of the Resurrection.

Thus also in our days man, even the priest, is frequently enough surpassed by woman in courageous suffering and readiness to make sacrifices. As a rule, indeed, man is more courageous and energetic in the open warfare of everyday life. But woman displays greater perseverance and strength in suffering pain and bearing up under adversity. Her love is more intimate, more pure, more unselfish, and therefore more faithful. What glorious, magnanimous souls of women the Lord calls His own even today!

The Easter liturgy of the Church echoes this priority of women on a charming musical note. How jubilant the *"Vesperae autem sabbati"* resounds through the vaulted church! What a fine monument the Church has erected to Mary Magdalen in the incomparable *"Victimae paschali,"* and to the pious women in the Gospel of the feast!

b) In what manner does the Lord appear to these pious women? He does not show Himself to them immediately at the sepulchre. They were still too confused and not yet in the proper frame of mind. For this reason He prepares them by the apparition of the angels. Now they know that He lives, and on their hurried homeward way, filled with joy and consolation, talk about their experience at the sepulchre, gradually recalling the Master's positive predictions, and hoping soon to see Him with their own eyes.

Of a sudden they stand still, affrighted. A radiant figure appears before them. One glance and they know it is the Master. And as quickly they hear from His lips the friendly, encouraging greeting: *"Avete!"* The sight of Him, His kindly greeting, coming from such lips, fills them with unutterable bliss. They are irresistibly drawn to Him.

"But they came up and took hold of His feet and adored Him" (Matt. xxviii, 9). With what devotion and happiness they must have done so! And the Saviour graciously allowed them to do as they wished. They had deserved this privilege. How kind He is to them! So utterly without rigid dignity, so wholly human and approachable, and yet so divine! Gentleness and majesty are united in Him in such a manner that reverence does not act as a barrier to confidence.

c) "Then Jesus said to them: Fear not!" (Matt. xxviii, 10). While formerly the Master had always encouraged His followers to confidence, He is now particularly solicitous to banish all fear and diffidence that might be aroused by His strange appearance. Therefore, His repeated friendly *"Nolite timere!"*

This expression, the dominant note of true, gentle ascetics, goes back to the Saviour Himself. Even today "pious women" frequently lack confidence. In its stead there is a tendency towards anxiety, uneasiness, and scrupulousness. Frequently the fault lies with the confessors, who are too sparing with the friendly *"Avete,"* the confidence-inspiring *"Nolite timere!"*

d) The nearness and vision of the Lord brings

heavenly bliss. The mere feeling of His proximity here on earth before the tabernacle, in Holy Communion, makes us happy—how will it be in Heaven! *"Hic quam diu potes morare, non delicias tuas somnus interpellet, nullus exterior tumultus impediat!"* (St. Anselm).

While excitement reigns in the city, gossip and trade come to life in the streets, worry and anger spread in the Sanhedrin and deep dissatisfaction in the palace of Pontius Pilate, this scene, overflowing with consolation, this charming meeting occurs outside the city in a quiet garden, on a lonely path. Thus in our churches, in the early morning hours, silent experiences of pious souls take place before the tabernacle, at the altar railing ———the friendly *"Avete,"* the granting of permission to kiss the Lord's feet.

We may note a faint echo of this scene in the kissing of the Pope's slipper at receptions in the Vatican. What a comfort for the pilgrims, after finally being admitted to an audience, to be greeted by the Vicar of Christ in a friendly manner and, filled with reverence and veneration, to be allowed to kiss his feet!

II. The Message

"Go, tell My brethren that they go into Galilee, there they shall see Me" (Matt. xxviii, 10).

a) It is characteristic that the Lord, although he appears to the women first, nevertheless thinks first of His "brethren," the Apostles. It is on their account that the women are honored by this manifestation. They are the

principal object of His solicitude. And though they have been surpassed in loyalty by the women, they are nevertheless His Apostles, His representatives, His instruments, the leaders of His Church.

And so it has remained. Frequently women are honored by more extraordinary graces than men, but in the public life of the Church they hold a subordinate position. "Tell My brethren!"

b) The message borne by the women was to bring the disciples together again, at least exteriorly. The storm of the Passion had driven them apart as the wolf scatters the sheep (Matt. xxvi, 31); they had been dispersed, every man to his own, as the Lord had foretold (John xvi, 32). The report that He had risen and had been seen by some was bound to spread quickly among the disciples and lead them all to the meeting-place on Sion, where they hoped to learn more. Once they were together, Peter, after being himself strengthened, could the more easily fulfil his task, to "confirm the brethren."

Moreover, these messages were to prepare the souls of the Apostles and in a measure to relieve them of their discouragement, as indeed happens in the case of Peter and John.

III. Significance of the Manifestation

The women occupied no official position in the Church; nor were they commissioned to give testimony to the Resurrection of Christ by preaching. Nevertheless the Saviour appeared to them first. Why?

a) In the first place, the distinction thus conferred

upon the women was probably intended as a reward for the loyalty and perseverance shown by them during the Passion.

b) And although they were not called to give public testimony—as a matter of fact, St. Paul makes no mention whatever of their testimony in 1 Cor. xv, 5 ff.—they were nevertheless qualified to bear witness in the narrower confines of the family. They are not sent to the people, but to the Apostles. In the official life of the Church the principle: *"Taceat mulier in ecclesia"* indeed obtains; yet it has remained the vocation of pious women to serve as executors of important missions in the interest of the Church on the strength of private revelations. One need but think of Brigid of Sweden, Catherine of Siena, Juliana of Liège, Margaret Mary Alacoque, Maria Droste zu Vischering!

c) The Lord shows on this occasion that woman has the same, nay, under certain conditions, even a larger share in all supernatural graces and blessings; that the measure and priority in such participation is not determined by dignity and office, but solely by the degree of love and loyalty one has evidenced towards the Lord in time of trial.

IV. Pious Women in Subsequent Ages

The conduct of the risen Saviour towards the pious women offers a gauge and guide to estimate the numerous extraordinary graces later bestowed on so many holy women. His appearances and proofs of favor are a prelude to, and an exemplar of, those particular rela-

tions between the Eucharistic King and certain chosen women in secular and religious life.

a) We meet with and are fascinated by this mystical love for Christ and its reward, evidenced by celestial graces and visions, already in the days of the Catacombs, in the cases of Agnes, Cecilia, Felicitas, Perpetua, and others.

Ah, the marvel of this mystical relation in the life of an Elizabeth, a Hedwig, a Gertrude, a Mechthild, a Juliana of Liège, a Catherine of Siena, an Angela of Foligno, a Teresa, a Margaret Mary Alacoque, down to Ann Catherine Emmerick, Teresa of the Child Jesus, Gemma Galgani, and a thousand other lovely flowers blooming in the sanctuary.

When we recall the remarkable kindness and cordiality shown by the risen Saviour to the holy women and the strong element of personal love, warmth, and enthusiasm revealed by them, we shall not readily be shocked if many things in the lives of these pious souls appear exaggerated.

b) There is scarce one feature of the Gospel reports that is not repeated by way of special favors granted in subsequent times: Apparitions of the Lord, sweet converse, the friendly address, the familiar "Mary," "*Avete*," the jubilant cry *Rabboni*, the joyful embracing of His feet, the heavenly bliss filling the favored souls.

From these instances we may derive useful instruction concerning the essence and operation of that spiritual consolation which plays so important a part in the lives of souls favored by divine grace.

The commission given Magdalen and the pious women, to acquaint the Apostles with the Lord's appearance, and the difficulties they encountered in eliciting belief and understanding, are also repeated in later centuries. We need but think of the opposition, decisive rejection, criticism, and even ridicule with which the visions of a Juliana, a Teresa, a Margaret Mary, an Ann Catherine Emmerick met! *Deliramenta visa sunt!* Their acceptance was a slow process.

c) Further, the facts and reports presented in the Gospel offer a dependable criterion for judging all such exceptional graces, visions, and commissions. As long as they remain within the range of the Evangelic exemplars and bear their spirit and stamp, one may safely champion their genuineness. We have seen how the Lord speaks—briefly, simply, plainly, not going beyond woman's individual character and her position in the Church. Whatever does not correspond to these marks, *e. g.,* lengthy discourses and speculative theological discussions, must be regarded with suspicion.

d) Finally, we have here a serviceable guide to the distinction between private revelations and decisions made by the Church. The former, however valuable, always rest on the testimony of private individuals who are subject to error and require the approval of the Church. Not until Christ appeared to Peter did all doubt and vacillation cease, at least with the majority: "The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared to Simon" (Luke xxiv, 34).

These same pious women also show us that much human folly and weakness may go hand in hand with

marks of exceptional divine favor; for their chief concern was the embalming of the Lord's body.

IX. UNBELIEF OF THE DISCIPLES

I. The Fact of Unbelief

a) A striking and almost painful trait of the history of the Resurrection is the unbelief and stubborn doubting of the disciples, a trait the naïvely honest reporting of the Evangelists does not permit them to conceal.

b) The message delivered by the women is not credited by the disciples. Concerning Mary Magdalen we read: "She went and told them that had been with Him, who were mourning and weeping. And they hearing that He was alive and had been seen by her, did not believe" (Mark xvi, 10–11). The other women too met with unbelief: "And these words seemed to them as idle tales (*deliramentum*), and they did not believe them" (Luke xxiv, 11). Evidently also the disciples going to Emmaus had placed no faith in the report of the women (Luke xxiv, 22 ff.). Nor did the testimony of Peter convince all of them, and even when the Lord Himself appeared, some of them continued sceptical.

c) All of this indicates that something similar occurred in the matter of the Resurrection as in the revelation of the Eucharist. "This saying is hard, and who can hear it?" (John vi, 61). A sort of schism arises; the majority, grouped around Peter, believe, while the others, grouped about Thomas, hold aloof and doubt.

II. Groundlessness of the Doubt

Their unbelief utterly lacked justification and amply deserved the reproach uttered by Our Lord.

a) How frequently, especially in the recent past, had the Master clearly foretold His fate, always joining suffering, death, and resurrection! Did not each of His predictions of the Passion close with the words: But on the third day He shall rise again? With respect to His suffering, everything had been literally fulfilled. Why, then, should not the prediction concerning the Resurrection also become a reality?

b) Moreover, the declarations of the women were altogether credible. They came from the mouth of pious disciples who belonged to the Lord's familiar circle. There were among them the mothers of Apostles and disciples, *e. g.,* the mother of the Zebedees, the mother of James and Mark, etc. Furthermore, there was not merely one person's statement, but a number of individuals agreeing with each other. And the words of the Lord, as related by them, were clear and precise, a faithful echo of the words spoken by Him at the Last Supper.

c) Assuredly the Resurrection was a most extraordinary event. But was extraordinary divine intervention in the laws of nature something strange or unusual to the believing Israelites? Were not the Scriptures full of the miraculous deeds of God? Had not Our Lord worked great miracles before their very eyes and proven Himself Master of nature and of death? Had He not, with evident reference to His own Resurrec-

tion, raised Lazarus from the dead, and had they not, with their own eyes, seen a dead body rise from the tomb? Had not the extraordinary happenings at the death of Christ shown them that the Father had not turned His countenance from Him, but taken His part?

Yet in spite of it all they showed obstinate unbelief, assuming at times the form of actual insult!

III. Explanation of Their Incredulity

a) It is true, Our Lord had clearly and positively foretold His Resurrection along with His Passion and death, and had, as recently as the Last Supper, announced an early joyful reunion. But all that had been erased, wiped out from their memory by the one terrible fact—His bloody death on the cross. This crushing impression dominates everything, crowds out every other memory, and leads to a very tragedy of weakness and failure.

b) They had probably not quite forgotten His prediction concerning the Resurrection; it lived as a weak hope in their subconscious minds. However, they had a false idea of the Resurrection. The words "to rise from the grave" to them signified a sort of spiritual revivification. True, the raising of Lazarus should have taught them better. Yet this act was something wholly different from Our Lord's Resurrection. At Lazarus' tomb stood the Master, to whom nothing is impossible. But now this same Master is dead. That He would rise from the grave by His own power was an utterly new and strange thought.

c) Then, too, it was not only the fact of the Resurrection to which they had not yet become fully reconciled, but in addition also the strange, unaccustomed mode of life adopted by the risen Saviour. If He were truly risen and had really appeared, why did He vanish again immediately? Why did He not remain in their midst as He had formerly done? The disciples had yet to accustom themselves to these new, surprising facts.

And if He were truly risen and had appeared, why had He not shown Himself first to the Apostles and disciples? Why had He appeared to the women, before permitting them to see Him?

Thus petty thoughts and objections may readily encroach upon matters of faith and influence the will to believe.

d) The fact that a number of the disciples still doubted even when the Master stood before them, may be explained in part by the change in His appearance, which had about it something supernatural. His glorified appearance was different than it had previously been. The repeated statement, "They did not believe," may also be understood in this sense that new disciples were continuously joining the original circle, and these late comers had not seen Jesus since His death; everything was new to them.

Thus we can in a measure understand the disciples' incredulity, although they may by no means be absolved from all guilt.

e) *We* certainly have no reason to find fault with the disciples because of their incredulity. How much less are we to be excused when, at times, we seem to

forget everything our holy faith teaches, and conduct ourselves as though we had never heard anything of the eternal truths! How otherwise could a priest's sin be explained? We stand in the bright light of fulfilment, and yet what unbelievably foolish thoughts and objections to the faith find lodgment at times in the heads of priests, young and old!

IV. The Master's Manner

a) That the unbelief of the disciples was not wholly pardonable, is revealed by the Master's censure. "He upbraided them with their incredulity and hardness of heart, because they did not believe them who had seen Him after He was risen again" (Mark xvi, 14). Theirs was the same slowness in understanding and sluggishness in believing with which the Saviour had repeatedly found fault on previous occasions.

b) Nevertheless the Saviour treats these His first priests with great patience and love. He is not deceived by their queer, shrinking behavior. He not only reproves them, but helps them, meets their weakness, and endeavors to solve the *scandalum crucis* for them with the aid of thorough-going proofs from the Scriptures. With what moving condescension He offers them all possible arguments to prove that it is He Himself. He takes them as they are and treats them with kindness and forbearance.

He treats His representatives in the same manner even today.

V. Skepticism in the Church

a) As Christ had clearly foretold, the miracle which stood at the cradle of His Church was to accompany her through all the centuries.

But a miracle is something extraordinary, transcending the accustomed natural order, and therefore readily encounters skepticism and unbelief. Either one does not believe the witnesses because he thinks they have been deceived, or one closes one's mind to the testimony of the senses, declaring: It is imagination, a phantom, a ghost. Thus the skepticism of the disciples at the Resurrection is constantly being repeated.

Pious women, with their love and devotion to the supernatural, are more open-minded and receptive than men. The Saviour needed but to show Himself to the women who had remained faithful to Him. They recognized Him instantly, and followed the testimony of their hearts.

It is different with men. Their difficulty originates in the intellect. They are more sober, reserved, and critical. They readily become perplexed and stubborn, and thus block the way to the operation of grace.

b) The clergy in particular have inherited the skepticism of the disciples. The moment anything miraculous is reported from anywhere, *e. g.*, apparitions or miraculous cures at holy places, long revered by the faithful, many priests are prompt to raise doubts and objections.

Some immediately reject everything *a limine* as an

illusion or a hoax. And these often are precisely the same who are extremely gullible in other respects, believing everything they read in the newspapers, looking up with respect to certain coryphaei of science, and often swallowing their findings and conclusions without testing or even understanding them, the while they set aside miracles and evidences of divine grace as *deliramenta* or even make them the subject of ironical remarks.

Here as everywhere it is necessary to find the proper middle path between gullibility and undue skepticism.

c) One might indeed become discouraged upon finding, in oneself and others, after so many years of clerical training and striving after spiritual perfection, so little dependability, firmness, and fidelity in the imitation of Christ, and of seeing how the weaknesses, the pettiness and the folly of the disciples on the morning of the Resurrection are again and again renewed.

How comforting, on such occasions, is a meditation on the story of the Resurrection! On the one hand the foolish, stubborn, ungenerous conduct of the disciples, on the other hand the incomprehensible love, gentleness, and consideration of the Master, who overcomes all difficulties and opposition, follows the disciples with unbelievable kindness, adapts Himself to their weakness, and forgives their mean conduct.

Then one acquires new courage; for the Lord is still the same gentle Master. Today, too, He makes allowance for the weakness of His disciples and is not disturbed by anything He may encounter.

X. JESUS APPEARS TO PETER

I. Reasons for this Apparition

a) Christ's appearance to Peter is testified to by St. Luke (xxiv, 34): "The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared to Simon," and by St. Paul (1 Cor. xv, 3 ff.): "For I delivered unto you first of all, which I also received, how that Christ. . . . was seen by Cephas and after that by the eleven." Beyond this the Scriptures tell us nothing in regard to this important manifestation.

At any rate it is certain that Peter, not John, was the first Apostle to see the Saviour after the Resurrection. The pious women are directed to him especially: "But go, tell His disciples and Peter" (Mark xvi, 7). Here Peter has priority. He had greater need of seeing the Lord; He was the chief, the leader, called to strengthen the others. Thus the Lord had clearly foretold: "But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not. And thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren!" (Luke xxii, 32).

b) Ludolphus of Saxony advances the following reasons for this preference: (a) For having been the first to confess Christ as the Son of God, Peter is to be the first to see Him glorified. (b) Peter's broken spirit is to be raised again, so that he, on his part, may encourage the brethren. (c) He was to hear he had been forgiven. (d) He was to learn from the example given by Jesus how he himself should later receive contrite sin-

ners, no matter how grave their guilt. (e) The Saviour wished to offer courage and hope of forgiveness to all sinners, including fallen priests.

c) It is assuredly remarkable that, apart from Mary, whose position is entirely unique, the first woman and the first man favored by an apparition of the Saviour had been sinners. It is a divine custom to confer special comfort on souls that have fallen, but have been truly converted. Witness the parables of the Prodigal Son and the Lost Sheep!

II. The Apparition

While we have extensive reports of other apparitions of the Saviour, this scene is not pictured in detail. But we know how the Lord was wont to hold converse with Peter. We need remind ourselves only of his calling, of the miraculous draught of fishes, of the "*Tu es Petrus*," of the Lord walking on the water, of the washing of the feet. Aided by these memories we can, *pie meditando*, piece out the event.

a) *Nocturn.* The report of the journey to the sepulchre closes with the words: "He . . . went away, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass" (Luke xxiv, 12).

He ponders and ponders. Has the Master truly risen? Will he possibly see Him again? And if so, what will He say, how will He receive him after his display of disgraceful weakness? He wavers between hope and doubting anxiety. One thing, however, is certain: he has become humble and is filled with sincere love and longing.

b) *Matins.* Suddenly, while he is in this twilight mood, Magdalen comes and cries in breathless haste: "I have seen the Lord, and these things He said to me. . . ." Her beaming eyes, her wholly altered demeanor, radiant with joyful Easter consolation, confirm her report. Everything she says pictures the Saviour as Peter knew Him. He feels as might a buried miner, who suddenly, after having given up hope, hears voices and sees a ray of light piercing the gloom of the caved-in shaft. So suddenly, so unexpectedly, that he scarcely dare believe, but can only feel his way, as though blinded, towards the ray of light. Then it is true after all, the Lord still lives! This is his first joyful thought. What a heavy load is removed from his heart!

But how—how will He receive me? Peter experiences the fears of the Prodigal Son.

But did not Magdalen report a word the Master said, that only now comes to his conscious mind clearly and warms his soul as spring sunshine warms the cold earth? "But go to My brethren . . ." (John xx, 17).

The Lord then, is still thinking of them—has not broken off their relations—they still belong together!

And now the other women come, and they have a special message for Peter: "Go, tell His disciples and Peter" (Mark xvi, 7).

How hungrily Peter must have listened to this message! What? The Lord has spoken of me by name? He has not cast me aside! He still loves me! He has accepted my contrition and penance, has forgiven me! I am still His Peter, and He still counts me among His Apostles, and in spite of my sin, He even maintains precedence

for me! Oh, sweet message, oh, radiant sunlight in the darkness of doubt! Peter's heart beats quickly, audibly . . . Now away, . . . away. . . . to Him! . . .

He is seized by a powerful desire to see the Master, to cast himself at His feet—to stammer: I am no longer worthy—

And so he hastens to the tomb, this time alone. Love and longing lend wings to his feet. His yearning for the Lord increases with each step, though ever and again rising fears tend to bar the way to his impetuous haste.

Now his heart is cleansed and prepared!—Contrite priest!

c) *Lauds.* Of a sudden he hears the dear, familiar voice: "Simon Peter!" He looks up, and there, before him, stands the Master in person, beautiful and glorified! He finds the wonderful eyes, from which, but a few days since, a glance of painful reproof had fallen on him, now resting on him with friendly radiance.

Peter has promptly cast himself on his knees, embracing the Lord's feet with the full impetuous energy of his honest, manly soul, and now pleads with a voice smothered by tears: "Master, forgive!"

And the Lord raises him up, embraces him, presses him to His bosom, and the old bond of love is sealed again, this time for all eternity. No suffering, no trial shall tear it asunder. How often has this scene been repeated since the day when priests have returned contritely to the Master, as for instance, at the Retreat. They, too, began in a disconsolate, hopeless frame of

mind. But thanks to the Master's love and grace all has turned out well. *"Apud Dominum misericordia, et copiosa apud eum redemptio"* (Ps. cxxix, 7).

After Peter's tears have ceased to flow and the Lord has repeatedly assured him of His love, He assigns to him the commission: Go now and confirm thy brethren, as I charged thee the evening before the Passion.

And Peter goes—ah, how happy, how blessed! None can share his emotions but they who have felt and tasted similar experiences.

III. Significance of the Apparition

a) It is the fulfilment of the words: *"et tu aliquando conversus confirma fratres tuos!"* (Luke xxii, 32). Therein lies the assurance that the Lord would appear to Peter in a special manner before showing Himself to the others.

How did it happen that, on the evening of the day of the Resurrection, the Apostles and disciples were again assembled in full numbers and in joyful mood? Probably the chief reason was the news that the Lord had appeared to Peter. As long as only the saintly women told of His appearance, the disciples did not believe the story, however truthful and sincere it seemed, but rather assumed it to be imagination or a dream. But as soon as Peter had stepped among them with glistening eyes and spoken to them, their attitude had changed. His authority, his holy enthusiasm, the transfigured joy, the entire change in his bearing—all of

these things contributed towards placing the stamp of truth on his statement and once more carried faith and assurance into the hearts of the wavering, doubting, mourning disciples. This influence is noticed in the joyful cry: "The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared to Simon!" Fulfilment comes to the Lord's words: *"Et tu aliquando conversus confirma fratres tuos!"*

Thus, too, it should be with the priest of God. He has made a good Retreat; the Master has appeared to him, with His teaching and His comfort. The fruit should be shared with the parish.

b) Peter presents himself on this occasion as the head of the congregation of the Apostles, and his position is not questioned or contradicted. The little community once more has a head, and now that the two disciples have returned from Emmaus, the moment has arrived for the Lord to appear to the entire harmoniously foregathered congregation.

c) Peter has experienced his second hour on Mt. Thabor, surpassing the first in rapture. On the former occasion the Lord had commanded silence: "Tell the vision to no man, till the Son of man be risen from the dead" (Matt. xviii, 9). Now this moment has come, and Peter probably told of that first transfiguration. This report of the first glorification on the mountain, at which Moses and Elias had appeared and spoken "of His decease, that He should accomplish in Jerusalem" (Luke ix, 31), and the voice had been heard saying: "This is My beloved Son; hear Him!" was bound to make a deep impression. Everything is clear now! (cfr. 2 Pet. I, 16 ff.)

XI. THE DISCIPLES GOING TO EMMAUS

I. On the Way

"And behold, two of them went, the same day, to a town which was sixty furlongs from Jerusalem, named Emmaus" (Luke xxiv, 13).

a) Who were these two men? Disciples of the Lord, closely attached to Him, witnesses of His teaching and His miraculous deeds—probably two out of the seventy disciples, and, according to all evidence, sincerely and enthusiastically devoted to Him, though not yet tried and proven.

One was named Cleophas. According to St. Jerome, he was born in Emmaus, while others maintain he was a brother of St. Joseph and father of the "Lord's brethren," the husband of Mary, wife of Cleophas. The second disciple, according to some, was Luke, while others contend it was Simon, a son of Cleophas and successor to St. James as Bishop of Jerusalem.

b) Whither did they go? Emmaus is probably El Kubebe, some 62–64 stadia from Jerusalem, on the road to Jaffa. It was known even before the time of the Crusaders of the eleventh century as Castellum Emmaus. It lies on a steep hill which is separated from Jerusalem by a wide valley. The path runs in a wide arc down the hillside and up again. Eusebius thinks the Biblical Emmaus was Nikopolis, now known as Amwas. But this town lies at a distance of 160 stadia from Jerusalem, which would have rendered a return of the disciples to the city on the same evening very difficult, the distance

between Amwas and Jerusalem being about 18⅓ miles.

c) What is it that urges these two men to leave Jerusalem and the company of the disciples? Their frame of mind. Theirs is precisely the disconsolate condition described by St. Ignatius in his famous rules regarding the discernment of minds.

1. *Darkening of the mind* (*obtenebratio animae*). The scandal of the cross has utterly confused them and shaken their faith. It is night in their souls, and the stars, otherwise so bright, seem to be extinguished.

Why? They had interpreted the great thoughts of God in terms of their own petty ideas. They think only of their own little Israel, which He, as the Messias, is to save and restore; God thinks of the whole world, of all humanity. Their thoughts dwell on national aggrandizement; His thought is of the redemption of mankind. They think of the unfolding of earthly pomp and glory; God's mind is on the great atoning work of world redemption. Their own petty ideas are their measure and guide, and since the divine plans, extending beyond those ideas by the measure of a whole world, are not in agreement with them, they shake their wise heads, become confused, and lose their bearings.

We can readily note here how incomplete was the disciples' concept of the Messias, to whom they assigned a primarily political rôle. They had no correct understanding of His divine nature. His apparent defeat had shaken their belief in His divinity.

2. They were the victims of *deep depression and hopelessness* (*agitatio mentis*). "*Sperabamus!*" They had indulged in beautiful hopes, had probably expected

to play an important part in His kingdom, which they pictured to themselves as an earthly realm. And now the terrible end of it all! Their hopes collapsed like a house of cards! Hence this word of hope voices sincere fear and anxiety for their own future along with true sorrow for the Master.

"Sperabamus!" This word shows clearly the weakness and imperfections of beginners who lose confidence at the first great difficulty, and measure the occurrences God permits to happen by the rule of their own limited understanding, without appreciation for the great plans of Providence.

"Sperabamus!" But now they hope for nothing more. Everything seems to have come to an end.

Similarly, false conceptions regarding vocation, worldly, selfish plans and expectations may frequently dwell in us. Disappointment and confusion will naturally follow.

"Today is the third day since these things were done" (Luke xxiv, 21). They had preserved a weak hope after the Saviour's death. Probably it had been enkindled by the marvelous happenings at His death. Perhaps they also had a dim recollection of the promise of His Resurrection on the third day. Possibly also they merely shared the common Jewish belief that something holy attached to the third day, that on it something decisive would happen (cfr. Gen. xxii, 4; Ex. xix, 15; 1 Esd. ix, 15; Os. vi, 3; Esth. v, 1, etc.). At any rate they felt disappointed. Probably they had expected some startling, successful *coup d'état* on the third day, a glorious victory over the enemy. Instead, there is naught

but the report: The tomb is empty and angels have announced His Resurrection. In their disappointment they refuse to believe this report. Things had not happened as they expected, hence, everything was a failure. Now they stood before the entire people, disappointed, deceived, and endangered. This is true melancholia; a mere phantasm is able to set reason utterly at naught. Instead of waiting to see what the third day might bring, they yield to disappointment and permit their actions to be determined by their discouraged mood.

3. Their sorrowing, disappointed hearts become a prey to utter *perplexity*. The disciples had been particularly depressed by the circumstance that the highest authorities in Israel had condemned the Lord. "How our chief priests and princes delivered Him to death, and crucified Him" (Luke xxiv, 20). The trial of Jesus had been decided by the highest court. The Saviour had, indeed, emphasized this very circumstance in advance, but they had forgotten that. It is remarkable that they have not one harsh word for the enemies of Jesus, not one word of indignation or even displeasure. What is the cause: reverence or recognition of authority?

He has been defeated in the struggle with the mighty hierarchs; they have caused Him to be crucified. That sealed His defeat. The outcome must necessarily appear to them as a defeat in view of their imperfect perception of the task of redemption as a voluntary sacrifice of atonement.

How fatal mistakes, injustices, wrong decisions of

ecclesiastical authorities may be! They confuse the minds of men.

What will the chief priests do now? Will they seize the followers of Jesus? At any rate, delay is dangerous. It seems best, therefore, to leave the danger zone and to seek refuge out in the little village, off from the highway, possibly among relatives. They leave the Holy City and the company of the Apostles and go on their way.

How important, in the light of these happenings, is the rule of St. Ignatius, to make no change, to refrain from entering upon new paths in time of disconsolateness! Many have lost their vocation as the result of hasty action while confused.

4. Many Christians act precisely as these disciples did in times of perplexity and depression. One has fashioned his little idyll. Everything has been foreseen in this dream of the future except the cross. And now it comes—the inner cross: discouragement, hopelessness, dryness, temptations; the outer cross: disagreement with a superior or one's confrères, non-success, disappointments, illness, persecution, etc. One was not prepared for these things. One loses self-control under such developments, is carried away by them. Courage is gone, eagerness for action, confidence; one begins to brood, to find fault with divine dispensations, to become confused and wavering in faith. We commit the fateful error of projecting our own miserable subjective mood into the objective truth and to doubt the sun and the eternal stars because they are concealed from us

by a few flimsy vapors of fog and mist; we see, measure, and value everything in the light of our own warped mood. Thus many a one becomes unfaithful to his vocation, at least in thought, leaves Jerusalem, the holy city, and the society of his confrères, and journeys to Emmaus—to another place, any place—to seek comfort.

What is it that drives one, in thought at least, out of one's vocation? Silly fear, cowardice, melancholia, morbid longing for human consolation. The spirit of faith is lacking, a higher concept of things, love for the cross, fortitude.

Away to Emmaus! One imagines that if one were elsewhere, in another place, in another vocation, everything would be splendid. This is a great deception, a true fata morgana, a grave danger for young priests and religious.

5. The disciples on the way to Emmaus have, in a measure, preserved one thing: love for, and attachment to, their Master. Their love for Him has not been entirely extinguished. It smoulders under the ashes, it shows itself in the sincere enthusiasm with which they speak of Him. This love is their salvation. It will save the priest, too, in serious temptation.

On the way they speak of Jesus. "They talked together of all these things which had happened" (Luke xxiv, 14).

Their conversation was colored by their sad mood, but also by loving memory. Possibly some of their talk was silly, but it did at least concern *Him*. He was the object of their grief, their sadness, their brooding.

Theirs was consequently at least a spiritual conversation. And it brought down blessing, in accordance with Christ's own promise. "Where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii, 20).

If Christ were closer to the souls of ever so many priests, and were, in greater measure, the object of loving meditation, they would speak of Him frequently when they meet. Yet how rarely is He the topic of priestly conversation! The subjects they speak of are frequently quite remote from Christ.

It is sad, indeed, that priests, seminarians, and religious so rarely engage in spiritual conversation! The saying is: From the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh. Sad, indeed, that priests talk so much of secular matters, politics, the *chronique scandaleuse, puerilia.* Most assuredly they should be joyous and cheerful; but in the right way and within due bounds.

II. The Companion on the Way

a) *The Master does not leave the disciples in their predicament.* The Good Shepherd sees the danger threatening His sheep. Filled with compassion, He follows them. He might have let them go their own way, for He does not need them; but love urges Him on.

Ah, the Master's kindness! How often has He not followed us when unreasonableness or discouragement led us into a wrong path!

How kind the Master is, particularly to His own, whom He has chosen, who once were close to Him!

How many in those days went the wrong paths of their choice, without the Master following them in His particularly loving manner, that He might cure their blindness! That is precisely the grace of vocation, of discipleship. It involves a claim to particular love.

Moreover, did not intercession also play a part? Was not Mary Cleophas one of the most faithful disciples of the Lord, and "sister" to His holy Mother? Had she not also stood under the cross? (John xix, 25). Probably it was she who had obtained this grace for her husband by prayer.

b) *He joined them.* "And it came to pass, that while they talked and reasoned with themselves, Jesus Himself also drawing near, went with them" (Luke xxiv, 15).

It seems the Lord walked beside them in silence for a while, and they, assuming He was fully informed, continued to converse with each other until He spoke to them. One can readily imagine that the sudden appearance of the stranger and his accompanying them was not apt to raise their drooping spirits. At first his company may have been uncomfortable, for they naturally would have preferred to be alone. One does not like to be disturbed in an intimate conversation, especially if it be concerned with some sad event. Possibly they hastened their steps at first, to leave him behind, or stopped to let him walk ahead. Soon, however, the appearance of the stranger and his friendly bearing won their good will.

c) *They did not recognize Him.* "But their eyes were held, that they should not know Him" (Luke

xxiv, 16). According to Mark, it was not only a subjective impression that prevented recognition, but there was an objective reason for it also: "And after that He appeared in another shape to two of them walking" (xvi, 12). He was strange and unrecognizable also in costume, feature, and general appearance. Possibly He wore the garb of the pilgrims journeying homeward after the feast, so that His features, even if they were not altered, appeared strange to them. Often a trifle may suffice to prevent recognition of an acquaintance, particularly if met where he is not expected. Besides, the disciples are weighed down by sadness and depression of spirit, which blind them as effectively as would a bandage covering their eyes. They are enfolded by a fog, which must be dispelled, held by a spell which must be broken. Meanwhile, the Lord quietly prepares their souls.

d) *He speaks to them.* Having walked with them in silence for a while, the Lord turns to them and asks in a friendly and sympathetic tone: "What are these discourses that you hold one with another as you walk, and are sad?" (Luke xxiv, 17). His tone and address are full of compassion, soothing to oppressed hearts. And He pretends to know nothing of what has occurred, so that they are impelled to tell Him everything and to unburden their souls. Thus contact is established. He affords them an opportunity to pour out their hearts, filled to overflowing, and thus provides Himself with the opportunity of teaching them. The Lord proves His mastery of the art of directing souls.

e) *Art thou a stranger?* the disciples ask. We, too,

sometimes ask the same question and act as though the Lord were a stranger and ignorant of what occupies our minds and causes us so much worry—as though He took no interest in events that strongly affect His honor and the fate of His Church; yet He is and remains the pivotal point of it all, and no one is more deeply concerned or more sympathetic than He.

f) *He listens to them.* Their tale bubbles and flows over from sheer interest and eagerness of their hearts. But He walks beside them in silence, perhaps smiling covertly, and permits them to unburden their hearts fully, giving them His personal attention, as if He were there for their sake alone.

Ah, the beauty of this trait, this patient attention so aptly described by the phrase, *grace of listening.* An important suggestion for superiors, confessors, and guides of souls. One must allow the poor people, subordinates, penitents, to tell their tale of sorrow and grievance without interrupting them. Such saddened souls have a need of scraping together their grievances from all the corners of their soul and of relieving themselves of them; they like to be listened to, and derive much relief therefrom.

What patience the Lord displays in listening to the incongruous story the disciples tell! How incredibly foolish is the talk, the lamentation of many a weak and confused soul, pouring out its tale of woe in the confessional! No reasonable, prudent priest will be seriously tempted to stop the stream of words with a harsh word! He will recall the example of the divine Father Confessor and Guide of souls.

g) *He reprimands them.* When they had finally told Him all that oppressed them, He began with a brief but unequivocal reprimand, which may indeed have been softened by His gaze and tone of voice. "Then He said unto them: O foolish and slow of heart to believe in all things the prophets have spoken" (Luke xxiv, 25).

Naturally they thought, as men of limited vision always do, that their sorrow was justified and their understanding quite correct. He promptly disillusions them, beginning by breaking down their conceit and making them humble and docile. He takes a firm hold of them, so that they may feel His authority. His reproof is that of an expert, serious-minded physician, and is bound to awaken confidence. One must approach discouraged souls with strength and assurance, so that they will permit themselves to be lifted up by the strong hand extended to them.

h) *He instructs them.* The forceful reproof is followed by a thorough instruction. His first act is the removal of the chief cause of their perplexity, the *scandalum crucis*, which He does very cleverly by way of a question and reference to Holy Writ. Why, He asks them, should all of this frighten and perplex you? It is in full accord with the Scriptures. You have an utterly false conception of the Messias; you picture Him as a secular ruler who is to lead the Jewish people to national greatness. But what do the Scriptures actually say: "Ought not Christ to have suffered all this and so to enter into His glory?" (Luke xxiv, 26).

And now He unfolds before their eyes the true picture of the Messias, as it had been ever more clearly

delineated since the time of Moses by prophet after prophet, showing them that the prophecies concerned not a temporal ruler, but a Saviour sent by God, who by suffering and dying should redeem the people from their sins. "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things that were concerning Him" (Luke xxiv, 27).

He did not do this by tiresome exegesis, citing text after text, but in swift, bold strokes, demonstrating in a compelling, comprehensive survey the marvelous connection between the Messianic prophecies, and explaining the divine plan of redemption in the light of Holy Scripture. Thus He could ask: Have you never read Isaias chapter liii? or the twenty-first Psalm, to which all the schools of the country give a Messianic interpretation? Have you never heard of the "Man of Sorrows"?

The disciples are startled and gaze up to the stranger. His self-confidence and assurance, the fluency of His address, its clearness and vigor amaze them. And the evident harmonious connection of it all! He must be right—no other explanation is possible. They listen with wrapt attention and expectancy. How strangely everything has been moved into a new light! They arrive at an entirely new point of view, so that, as in a vast panorama, everything looks different to them. The entire divine plan is unfolded in a wide historical perspective, like a landscape flooded with sunshine.

It must have been a splendid instruction, and assuredly the question arose again and again in the minds of the disciples: Who is this stranger who knows the

Scriptures so well? Involuntarily the memory of their dead Master flashed through their minds, for He, too, could speak in so marvelous a manner, and had also pointed to Moses and the prophets as witnesses for Him and as His precursors (Luke xvi, 16) and had declared their fate symbolic of His own (Matt. xvii, 12, 15; Luke xi, 47 ff.). But their eyes were not yet opened.

One burden after another is removed from their hearts. The darksome vapors are being wafted away, the landscape, the great panorama of truth, grows clearer before their eyes. Ever and again they are impelled to cast bright, marveling glances at this teacher, and ever and again they feel they must have heard him before. Is this not the same sweet magic that had enthralled them when they listened to Him of whom it was written: "Never did man speak like this man" (John vii, 46)? They feel ever more comfortable in His company and their hearts grow warm. "Was not our heart burning within us, whilst He spoke in the way and opened to us the Scriptures?" (Luke xxiv, 32).

When one senses the nearness of God more keenly than usual, this happy feeling, this exalted state of mind comes upon one. As long as the disciples were alone, their mood was gloomy, their conversation silly. But as soon as He is present and begins to speak, all is light and clearness, and perplexity vanishes. Thus it is with meditation and prayer. Without Him it is dry, stupid, miserable; with Him it is joy, enthusiasm, light and bliss!

The necessity of suffering which the Master applies to Himself, also holds for His disciples—for all Chris-

tians. *"Caput nostrum per passiones et angustias caelum introire videmus et nos membra eius nobis alia itinera somniamus! Monstruosa res est, si per unam foramen caput transire videmus, per aliud corpus. Pudeat sub spinato capite membra fieri delicata"* (St. Bernard, *Serm. de pass.*).

i) *Significance for the interpretation of the Scriptures.* The explanation of the Scriptures given by the Lord to the two disciples evidences primarily the strictly Messianic character of Old-Testament prophecy. Christ is its spiritual center, and it is unintelligible without this relation to Him.

How different the language of the holy sources when the Master explains them! How different the effect of sermons from ever so many pulpits would be if the preachers really knew Sacred Scripture and could expound it in its major interrelations!

Nothing can cause greater joy to the faithful than to be wholly convinced that these sacred words, which they commonly read without fully understanding them, have a deep meaning. "Was not our heart burning within us whilst He spoke in the way, and opened to us the Scriptures?"

Oh, that we too might achieve similar results with our sermons and lectures concerning the Word of God, that the hearts of our hearers too would burn! Their frame of mind and attitude of soul are often enough very much like those of the two disciples. They entertain wholly false, erroneous ideas of God and Christ, and have no thought of how, properly understood, everything works out in a wonderful manner. What joy

they experience when the right master opens their mind to the mysteries!

III. The Stop-Over

a) "And they drew nigh to the town, whither they were going, and He made as though He would go farther" (Luke xxiv, 28).

The Lord has prepared the two disciples by His discourses. He has awakened their faith, strengthened their hope, renewed their love. A sweet longing for Him has again arisen in their breast, they have come inwardly near to Him.

Time has passed with marvelous speed in His company, under the clarifying and refreshing influence of His words. Before they realize it, they are at the end of their journey—at Emmaus.

If the Saviour had gone farther, if they had let Him go, His comradeship and the conversation with Him would have unquestionably remained a pleasant memory, but nothing more. Probably it would have exerted no decisive influence on their future lives. He would have remained a stranger to them. They probably would not have returned to Jerusalem, would not have reestablished contact with the Apostles nor participated in the graces imparted and revelations made in that city and in Galilee. No! He must reveal Himself to them, must open their eyes. But they must merit this grace. True, He will gladly stay with them, but He desires to be invited.

He acts in a similar manner with us. He pretends

to be about to depart, to leave us to our own resources, so that our desire for Him may be increased and express itself in action.

From a companion on the way (this is His doing), He must become our guest (by our coöperation).

b) "But they constrained Him, saying: Stay with us, because it is towards evening, and the day is now far spent" (Luke xxiv, 29).

They do not merely invite Him, they urge Him to stay, "*manibus trahendo . . . ac verbis et rationibus alliciendo*" (Ludolphus). They detain Him by laying their hands on His arms, as Fra Angelico so expressively pictures the scene.

What impels them to do this? They have not yet recognized Him as their Master, though they are convinced He is a teacher, enlightened by God and related to them in spirit, wholly filled with the Master's thoughts, following the Master's manner. This is what has made Him so dear to them. They long to enjoy His companionship, and to hear more of His precious words, which have brought them so much comfort.

At the same time they would like to give Him some proof of their grateful reverence by receiving Him as their guest. They make themselves worthy of His grace by this love, and, as a result, their joy at having invited Him must have been doubled after they had recognized Him.

Possibly, too, Oriental hospitality may have influenced their action somewhat. Dusk is near, and He cannot go very much farther before dark. Hospitality

brings happiness and benediction, even as the divided mantle brought rich graces to St. Martin.

"Mane nobiscum!" What a short, beautiful prayer!

Thus the priest must pray when darkness threatens to oppress his soul; when the thought of the approaching dusk of life strikes his soul like a death knell. Stay with me, O Lord! Do not leave me alone!

Thus we priests must pray, especially at our thanksgiving after Mass. Here, too, *"fingit se longius ire,"* as though everything were over. Then we must lay hold of Him, detain Him, that He may remain near us in mind and spirit, that His holy image may not fade ere even the sacred species have been dissolved.

c) "And He went in with them" (Luke xxiv, 29). If Cleophas was a native of Emmaus, they naturally entered his house. The guest was undoubtedly received in the most friendly manner and led into the best room in the house. Mantle and staff are laid aside and the three men sit down to table to refresh themselves after the journey. Now the disciples have an opportunity to examine the stranger more closely. Intuition draws them to Him. Haven't they seen Him somewhere before?

IV. Recognition

a) "And it came to pass, whilst He sat with them at table. . . ." (Luke xxiv, 30).

The intellectual superiority of the stranger, so well versed in the Scriptures, had assured Him, without

further ado, the regard accorded a rabbi, and as a result He was given the seat of honor at table and took the place of the head of the house, whose duty it was to say grace and to break and distribute the bread.

Beyond doubt the conversation, interrupted by these events, was resumed and continued by way of question and answer. In this wise the souls of the two men drew nearer to the Lord and they were now prepared to receive Him.

b) "And it came to pass, whilst He sat at table with them, He took bread, and blessed, and broke, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight" (Luke xxiv, 31).

Suddenly, with a peculiar gesture, He takes the bread into His hands. The disciples look up in amazement. And while He breaks the bread, blesses it with eyes raised to heaven and offers it to them in boundless love, their eyes are opened: this is Jesus! But as they sit immovable and stare at Him, His figure is glorified. His eyes gleam with a supernatural light, the marks of His wounds sparkle, He seems to soar, His figure grows, becoming ever more radiant and brilliant. They attempt to rise and cast themselves at His feet. One last glance, a marvelous smile, and a blessing—and He has disappeared!

For a long time they sit fixed and speechless, their eyes staring into the distance. Finally the spell is broken, they arise and joyfully embrace each other. Conscious recognition, dammed up within them, breaks through:

It was the Lord! Ah, we felt it—we thought all the while—was not our heart burning?—O Master, dear Master! . . . But now away, back to the others!

c) They recognized Him by the breaking of bread, by the dignity and gravity with which He took it into His hands, blessed and broke it, just as He had done at the Last Supper, as He alone could do it!

Today, too, He prefers to attach His revelations to the breaking of the Eucharistic bread.

Do your disciples recognize you by the way you break the bread, as a priest of God, "another Christ"? Do you do everything in a manner compatible with the sacred drama of the Mass, so that the faithful behind you see the Master, so that faith and love are increased in them, so that they recognize Him behind the species and fall down in adoration?

Ah, that all priests might know Him at the breaking of the bread! That they might feel His sacred presence at least in that moment! That their eyes might be opened and they might be conscious of the comfort of His countenance!

d) Did the Lord on this occasion celebrate the Eucharist, and was it by this they recognized Him? Many indications favor this view. The verbal expression is the same at the institution of the Eucharist. One may verify this by comparing Luke xxiv, 30 with Luke xxii, 19 and 1 Cor. xi, 23 ff.; x, 16; Acts ii, 42. The expression for the ordinary eating of bread is different (Luke xiv, 1 and 15; Mark iii, 20; vii, 2). How could they have recognized the Lord positively by the break-

ing of bread, unless He broke it in a peculiar manner, differing from any other, unless, in other words, Jesus repeated on this occasion what He had done at the Last Supper! "*Et benedixit aliqua benedictione illis nota*" (Alb. Magn.).

The mere act of breaking bread, performed by the head of every household, could hardly have been a mark of identification. But if Jesus said, "This is My Body," then all doubt was removed. Moreover, while the common blessing was ordinarily given at the beginning of the meal, *this* blessing occurred at some time during the repast.

The circumstance that no mention is made of the chalice offers no difficulty, since in the early church the expression, "breaking of bread," meant the entire Eucharistic celebration.

Thus Jesus, by blessing the bread, blessed and dedicated the house of Cleophas at Emmaus as a house of God (St. Jerome, *Epist. ad Paul.*, 27).

"Lest anyone think he knows Christ without having part in His Church, it is written that their eyes were opened when He gave them the bread He had blessed. Jesus permitted that they should not know Him until the celebration of the mystery of the bread, in order that it might become evident that the union with His Body removes the obstacles of the enemy (the devil)" (*Augustine, De cons. evang.*, III, 24, n. 72). This view is shared by Bede, Maldonatus, and others.

e) "And He vanished out of their sight" (Luke xxiv, 31). The sudden disappearance shows the Master's glorified nature.—But why dost Thou vanish so soon,

O Lord? Why dost Thou not grant the disciples the joy of Thy sweet presence a little longer?—This very disappearance shows He has risen to a higher life.

This, too, is a peculiarity of divine consolations on earth. The *visitationes divinae* are like a ray of light piercing the clouds, a fleeting hour on Thabor's heights. They are not intended for us to rest at ease in them ("let us make three tabernacles"); rather they are an encouragement, a lifting up for the purpose of strengthening us in believing, hoping, and loving, so that we may be able to labor the better for God, as we shall see from the example of the two disciples.

These consolations are beyond our control. "The Spirit breatheth where He will" (John iii, 8).

V. The Return

"And rising up, the same hour, they went back to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven gathered together, and those that were with them" (Luke xxiv, 33).

a) Their hearts filled with unspeakable comfort, the two disciples did not hesitate, but quickly grasped mantle and staff and hastened back the same way by which they had come, though in an utterly different frame of mind.

Had the Master given them instructions, as He had to Magdalen and the women? It was unnecessary, for their heart impelled them to communicate their joy to their brethren.

In their previous warped mood they had lost contact with the brethren, thought only of themselves, and

grown indifferent to the ties that bound them to the others. Now that their heart is healed, their mind is enlightened, their soul overflows with consolation and joy, they remember the brethren, their worry and distress. They knew how sad and confused the brethren were. They cannot rest, but must share with them the consolation they had received. That is true brotherly love.

Moreover, they felt constrained to repair the scandal they had given by their lack of faith in the story of the pious women.

The journey was long, the day was drawing to its close, Jerusalem was in a dangerous mood. But they have no thought for weariness and danger. "*Viam mandatorum tuorum cucurri, cum dilatasti cor meum*" (Ps. cxviii, 32). Everything appears easy and light to them now. They have but one thought—"How happy the brethren will be to hear the glad news, for they will surely believe us!"

b) So we, too, must not selfishly keep divine consolation to ourselves, but communicate it to our brethren. *Amor est communicativus sui.*

If the priest has recognized the Lord in the breaking of the bread, if he has approached Him more closely while celebrating Mass, or while visiting the Blessed Sacrament, he will go to his daily tasks, to his brethren —the sick, the children, the penitent sinners—in quite a different frame of mind. Instead of painfully dragging himself along under the burden of disconsolateness, he will walk lightly with a joyful heart.

The bond that holds a community together is com-

mon faith and love for Our Lord. If this bond is loosened, the union is dissolved.

This whole beautiful mystery is repeated every year at the annual retreat of the clergy. Many enter upon it with an oppressed mind. They are confused, out of sorts by reason of the *scandalum crucis,* and have slowed down in the joyful performance of their priestly duties. The Master joins them quietly and walks at their side unrecognized, enlightening them and setting their warped minds aright. One burden after the other falls from their shoulders. *Sensim sine sensu* they come closer to the Lord in spirit. The fog is dispelled. Faith, hope, and charity are again kindled to light and flame, and finally they once more rest, overjoyed, against His bosom and glow with desire to impart the light and solace they have received to others.

Yes, we have a kind Lord and Master!

c) The two disciples at Emmaus thought they were the bearers of real news and expected to find their fellows still in the depths of sadness. But behold, they gaze into joy-lit faces, and their message, shouted in breathless haste, is answered by the cry: "The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared to Simon." (Luke xxiv, 34).

Nevertheless, their report is a glorious confirmation of the Resurrection.

Now the brethren are together again and a proper frame of mind has been re-established. The moment has arrived at which the Lord may manifest Himself to all of them at once.

XII. CHRIST'S FIRST APPEARANCE TO THE WHOLE COMMUNITY IN THE CHAMBER

I. The Circumstances

"Now when it was late that same day, the first of the week, and the doors were shut, where the disciples were gathered together, for fear of the Jews. . . " (John xx, 19).

a) Who was present? Luke tells us precisely when he says of the disciples who returned from Emmaus: "And they found the eleven gathered together, and those that were with them" (xxiv, 33). We may accept the term "the eleven" in its literal sense, meaning that Thomas also was present at the time, but left before the appearance of the Lord. Or the term may be understood as signifying "the Apostles." In addition to the latter many disciples, and probably also the pious women, were present. This is the first time since the Saviour's death that the community is assembled, a result, mainly, of the Lord's appearance to Peter.

b) It was the evening of the same day. The great day of the Resurrection, so replete with marvelous happenings and impressions, draws to its end and closes with the first manifestation of Christ to the disciples in common, which is to crown all previous revelations to individuals.

The Lord's purpose in distinguishing this first day after the Sabbath in so signal a manner was undoubtedly in part to replace the Jewish Sabbath by Sunday, the Lord's Day (Apoc. i, 10; 1 Cor. xvi, 2). That the

Church of the Apostles observed the Sabbath for a while, was a concession to Jewish tradition and custom. Such early records as the Didache and the letters of St. Ignatius show that Sunday was kept by the early Christians as a holyday.

In the evening. *"Sero apparuit, quia tunc maxime timidi erant"* (St. Bede). *"Praestolabatur, ut omnes convenirent"* (Theophyl.) All of the Saviour's followers were to be properly prepared.

c) The place where Christ appeared to them most probably was the hall of the last supper in the house of St. Mark. Consecrated by the Master Himself, this hall had become the customary meeting-place of His followers. It was the first "house of God" in the nascent Church, and witnessed all the most important revelations and events.

Behind closed doors. As is specifically stated, the doors were locked for fear of the Jews. This fear was by no means wholly unfounded. Probably the rumor, spread by the Sanhedrin, that the disciples had stolen the Lord's body, had already reached them. Consequently they had reason to expect violence. The locked doors secondarily were destined to reveal the fact that the Saviour had not risen to a continuation of ordinary mortal life, but to a higher life, and that His body, though real, was glorified and transfigured.

d) What was the frame of mind of the disciples? It seems that on the arrival of the two disciples from Emmaus the others were sitting at table (Mark xvi, 14), in a joyfully excited mood. The appearance of the Lord to Peter had put an end to the skepticism of the major-

ity and the arguments and counter-arguments that had occupied them. The absence of Thomas was favorable to the optimistic mood of the gathering. Now they hope He will show Himself to all of them and longingly and expectantly look forward to His coming. The arrival of the disciples from Emmaus is bound to intensify their joyous expectation. The details of their story are discussed in animated conversation. "And they told what things were done in the way and how they knew Him in the breaking of bread" (Luke xxiv, 35). The Saviour's kindness and love once again appear in a bright light. Sparks seem to fall from the conversation into the hearts of the disciples and to cause their longing to grow ever more intense. Now their mood is right, now their hearts are prepared.

II. The Apparition

"Jesus came and stood in the midst" (John xx, 19).

a) *Manner of appearance.* It seemed as if a ray of sunlight had fallen into the hall in which the dusk was gathering. Suddenly a radiant figure stands in the midst of the disciples, surpassingly graceful and delicately formed, clothed in a resplendent white garment. He has not come through the locked door. He is suddenly in their midst.

"Stetit in medio, ut omnes cum certitudinaliter agnoscerent et omnes consolationem suae praesentiae reciperent. Medius locus est dignitatis. . . . Christus stetit in medio discipulorum sicut sol inter sidera, ut eos illuminaret; sicut flos inter lilia, ut eos decoraret; sicut

princeps inter milites, ut eos corroboraret; sicut magister inter discipulos, ut eos informaret; sicut pater inter filios, ut eos concordaret; sicut cor inter membra, ut ea vivificaret, et sicut communis amicus, ut omnibus se communicaret" (Ludolphus).

Thus the Lord stands among His priests when they meet for meditation or in honor of His Blessed Mother.

b) *His Greeting.* "And He said to them: Peace be to you!" His lips part, and sweet as the tone of a church-bell at dawn, clear and soothing, His beloved voice resounds through the hall: "Peace be to you!"

This was the customary greeting between friends, but it had a special significance here. He had, at parting, promised them a peace which the world cannot give. *Pax cordis, pax reconciliationis.* He knew the condition of their soul, knew how grievously His Passion had tried and saddened them. They were restlessly wavering between fear and hope, belief and doubt, disturbed like the surface of water whipped by a storm. What they lacked was peace. Hence the greeting: *Pax vobis!*

Peace is Heaven's choicest gift. On the lips of Jesus the greeting has sacramental power: it effects what it says.

"Unde Pontifex, praecipuus sponsus Ecclesiae, in persona Christi sicut specialis vicarius eius dicit: Pax vobis! cum in missa primo se vertit ad populum, quia haec fuit prima vox Christi ad discipulos post resurrectionem; instar vero aliorum sacerdotum dicit postea: Dominus vobiscum! ut se unum ex nobis ostendat" (Ludolphus).

And everything about the Lord is in accord with this

greeting. His appearance is kind and gentle and calm, His words are all comfort and encouragement, His heart is a flame of love—the old, undiminished love.

Thus, too, the Lord enters into the society of His priest-disciples when they are assembled for the spiritual Retreat: He wishes to bring complete peace of soul to all or to increase it.

c) *His Reproof.* The kindness and love of Our Lord is not soft and weak, but firm and vigorous. It is compatible with, nay, demands a reproof where reproof is merited. Besides, the hearts of the disciples should be cleansed of everything that stands in the way of their peace of soul. Therefore, the Saviour follows up His greeting with a well-merited reprimand: "He upbraided them with their incredulity and hardness of heart, because they did not believe them who had seen Him after He was risen again" (Mark xvi, 14).

Unbelief is the worst enemy of an apostle who is commissioned to preach the faith to others. How can he who is himself weak in the faith, impart its firmness and joy to others!

d) *Effect of Christ's Appearance.* Naturally, the effect of the Saviour's apparition was different on different individuals. Peter, John, the disciples who had been to Emmaus, and the pious women, who had already seen Him, were filled with joy at beholding Him again because it confirmed their testimony. The words of the Gospel: "The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord" (John xx, 20) apply first of all to them. But for the rest the manifestation was something en-

tirely new. Christ's sudden appearance, without preceding notice, without the door being opened, as immediate as a ray of sunlight—all this was apt to create the impression of a specter. True, He was the same in figure and feature, yet so different, so ethereal, so gloriously transfigured.

This explains the words recorded by St. Luke: "But they being troubled and frightened, supposed that they saw a spirit" (Luke xxiv, 37). If a saintly bishop arose from the grave and suddenly appeared at a meeting of his priests, his presence, even though it had been announced, would inspire fear.

Now those same lips that had uttered the calming words during that stormy night on the lake speak reassuringly: "*Nolite timere. . . . Quid turbati estis et cogitationes ascendunt in corda vestra?*" (Luke xxiv, 38).

III. He Offers Proofs

a) It is touching to read how the Lord endeavored to approach His followers again, to overcome their hesitancy and to dispel their doubts. They believed they saw a ghost. He, therefore, offered them proofs, called all their senses to witness that He was not a spirit, but had a real body.

He has them use their eyes. Behold My hands and feet, and know it is I. Do you not know these hands, and do not the marks of the wounds tell you that this is the same body that hung on the cross?

But the eye can be deceived; its proper object is only outer form and figure and color. Is this figure standing in their midst truly flesh and blood, or an ethereal vision? His sudden appearance, the doors being locked, suggests this possibility. Therefore, He offers them further proof by the sense of touch: *"Palpate et videte, vita spiritus carnem et ossa non habet, sicut me videtis habere."* And He shows them His hands and feet with the radiant marks of the wounds.

"But while they yet believed not, and wondered for joy, He said: Have you here anything to eat?" Thus He offers them another tangible proof by the sense of taste which clearly marks actual physical life.

b) They believed not and wondered for joy. This expression is very significant. The facts were too beautiful to be true. We realize clearly from this how utterly their hope of ever seeing Him again had vanished, how difficult it was for them to grasp the miracle of the Resurrection. It required a great effort to make them familiar with the joyful reality.

The experience of the disciples is similar to that of a man who has stood at the brink of the grave, and now for the first time stepping out into the warm sunshine can scarce believe he may once more drink in the fresh air, once again enjoy this life, to which he had already bidden farewell. (Cfr. Gen. xlv, 26; Acts xxii, 15.)

How often does not man fear to believe and to hope because the divine goodness seems too great, quite incomprehensible in fact. Many a man who is absolved

of grievous guilt, borne for years, can scarcely believe that now all is well again.

c) The two disciples who went to Emmaus had recognized the Saviour in the breaking of the bread. He again arranges a sacred agape here. It brings Master and disciples together more quickly than anything else; it reminds the latter most forcibly of their last joint presence in this same room. Probably the Master joined them at table, again taking the place of honor as on that occasion. Since they were probably at table when He appeared, everything was ready to hand. "And they offered Him a piece of a broiled fish, and a honeycomb. And when He had eaten before them, taking the remains, He gave to them" (Luke xxiv, 42 f.). Thus the last doubt was removed: it was the Lord Himself, not a spectral body.

The Lord really eats, *i. e.,* He places food in His mouth, chews and swallows it; otherwise His action would have failed of its purpose. "It would prove lack of power if the body of the Glorified Saviour could not eat, lack of glorification if it must eat. The thirsty earth drinks in the drop of water in one way, the sun's ray absorbs it in another" (St. Aug., *Ep.*, 49, 11).

He gave what remained to His followers in order to re-establish the former paternal relation. The scene is set again as it was at the Last Supper, and now they are reminded of something He said on that occasion: "A little while, and now you shall not see Me; and again a little while, and you shall see Me. . . . I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice" (John xvi, 16, 22).

In this manner, by His spirit-like coming, to which He joins proofs of His bodily existence, Jesus communicates to the disciples a correct idea of the Resurrection and of His glorified state. He is the same, yet His mode of being is different; and naturally it will take time for them to become accustomed to this new mode.

We now understand the importance the Apostles later attached to the fact that they had not only seen the Risen Saviour, but had touched His body and eaten with Him (1 John i, 1 ff.).

d) Objections and difficulties similar to those encountered by the disciples in connection with the appearance of the Master may arise concerning the Eucharist. The mystery is almost too beautiful, too grand, too extraordinary to be true. But can He not say in this respect also: I have promised this to you and clearly foretold it; why do you not believe?—"And He upraided them with their incredulity."

In the Eucharist the Lord is indeed visible and tangible, yet without His accustomed figure. *Adoro te devote, latens deitas, quae sub his figuris vere latitas.*

In the Eucharist the apparition in the upper chamber is repeated after a fashion. Jesus comes through closed doors, as it were, since our senses do not perceive Him. He is in the midst of the soul, offering His greeting: *"Pax huic domui!"* And He brings joy and peace; sits at table with us; gives us His own flesh and blood as food and drink. He comes and goes, tarrying but briefly. The Saviour is also present in His glorified state under the Eucharistic species.

XIII. INSTITUTION OF THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

The disciples were now to be restored to their former courageous and self-confident frame of mind. The best means to this end was that the Lord vested important powers in them, as a most convincing proof that all their former relations toward Him continued as before and that He still looked upon them as His disciples and Apostles. Viewed from this angle, the institution of the Sacrament of Penance logically attaches to the scene of His recognition by them.

As He sent them to the altars of the New Covenant at the Last Supper, so now He sends them into the confessionals of His Church.

I. "Pax Vobis!"

He opens the important action with a repetition of His greeting: *"Pax vobis!"* (John xx, 21). Peace, reconciliation with God, is the fruit of His death on the cross, a fact the Lord indicates by showing the marks of His wounds. He carries this peace, as it were, in His pierced hands. And this peace, which He has earned, He wishes to bring not only to the little group in the cenacle, but to the entire Church of the future. That group was to carry it out into the wide world, barren of peace, to all peoples, into all these billions of hearts harassed and burdened by sin and guilt, by means of this new and marvelous sacrament He is about to institute.

This sacrament of the forgiveness of sins is the first glorious fruit He plucks from the tree of the cross.

The Lord's Easter greeting should never die. It wakens its loudest echo precisely during the paschal season, when all His faithful followers, reconciled to Him by a good confession, have regained or confirmed in themselves the peace of God. At no other time is the reign of peace in the heart of the Church so general.

II. Sending the Disciples out into the World

"As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you" (John xx, 21). For what purpose had the Father sent Him? Chiefly to save what was lost (Luke xix, 10; 1 Tim. ii, 6), to seek the lost sheep, to raise up the broken reed, to rekindle the glowing wick to flame and light. In short, atonement and remission of sins are the chief object of His mission. And how marvelously He executes it!

This mission of grace and mercy was not, however, to cease; it was to be continued during the centuries to come. The Sacrament of Penance is the enduring embodiment of Christ's love for sinners.

It is, then, a true mission. "*Pro Christo ergo legatione fungimur. . . . Obsecramus pro Christo: Reconciliamini Deo*" (2 Cor. v, 20).

In fact, scarce anywhere do we priests represent Christ as fully as in the confessional, where the issue is the saving of souls.

III. The Baptism of the Spirit

The disciples may have thought in their hearts: How can we poor sinners carry out this mission? The Lord supplies the answer: Not by their own strength were they to do so, but by strength from above. "When He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost!" (John xx, 22). Breath is the symbol of the Holy Ghost, whom He communicates to them and who goes forth from Him like breath from the mouth. Breathing upon is a symbol of the divine creative act, of imparting life. "He breathed into His face the breath of life" (Gen. ii, 7). By the breath of the Creator man was made a natural image of God; by the grace of the sacrament the image, disfigured by sin, is restored in the supernatural order. In a manner similar to that in which the soul gives life to the body, making it beautiful, vigorous, capable of motion, grace renders the soul vigorous with life, efficient, a *nova creatura* (2 Cor. v, 17).

Now the disciples are to realize from a new example what the Master meant when at the Last Supper He spoke at such length of the Holy Spirit, who was to come upon them and complete His work.

This scene in the cenacle is renewed in a touching fashion in the ceremonies of ordination to the priesthood.

IV. The Power to Forgive Sins

"Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain they are retained" (John xx, 23).

a) *"Haec verba certiora sunt quam omnia regum edicta et diplomata"* (St. Augustine).

The objection that such a delegation of divine privilege is unworthy of God, is refuted by the clearness of these words. But God does not surrender His privilege. It is He who grants pardon, on the strength of the merits of Christ, who shed His blood in atonement for our sins. God simply speaks to the individual sinner through His ambassadors, who can do naught by their own power, but pronounce absolution by virtue of the authority vested in them from above. *"Dominus noster Jesus Christus te absolvat; et ego auctoritate ipsius te absolvo."*

The Son of man has power to forgive sins (Matt. ix, 6), and consequently can also delegate this power. As His disciples teach and baptize in His name, so they also say in His name: *"Ego te absolvo."*

Most assuredly, what occurs here is marvelous and extraordinary. "Neither to the angels nor the archangels did God give this power; for to them it is not said: Whose sins you shall forgive. . . . True, the rulers of earth have also power to bind, but they can bind only the body. This binding by the priest extends to the soul and reaches into Heaven; for what the priests do on earth, God confirms on high, and the Lord approves of the judgment spoken by His servant. . . . What power is greater than this? The Father has given all power to the Son, and I see all power given by the Son to them" (St. John Chrysostom).

In truth, the entire procedure and its solemn setting of ceremonies (the greeting, the solemn words conveying the mission, the act of breathing upon the disciples) show that something extraordinary is taking place, exceptional authority is being conveyed on this occasion.

b) This power is general and unlimited as to kind, number, and grievousness. Sins can be remitted again and again. Here, too, the maxim holds good: *"Non dico tibi usque septies, sed usque septuagies septies"* (Matt. xviii, 22). God's mercy is boundless; boundless, too, are the merits of Jesus Christ, who died for all men and atoned for the sins of all. And this commission holds good for all times and all peoples. The power has been granted to meet a need which is constant among men in every age.

c) The disciples are appointed judges; therefore, they must pass judgment; hence they must know the offence and the measure of guilt; for one thing the Almighty cannot communicate to them—namely, His omniscience.

Divine justice demands that remission of sins be made dependent upon a condition. This condition is confession. Humiliating self-accusation before God's representative is the real penance.

d) The Apostles could understand all of this only in its *literal* meaning. They knew that Jesus had the power to forgive sins, that He had Himself forgiven sins, using even the same words: "Thy sins are forgiven thee" (Matt. ix, 2; Luke v, 20; vii, 48). If,

then, the Lord on this occasion solemnly bestowed this power upon them, He could mean it in the literal sense only.

We have here an excellent example of how the spirit of heresy blinds the mind, divesting this beautiful scene of its true character and pretending to be unable to see in Christ's solemn words the charter of the Sacrament of Penance. St. Ambrose wrote very pointedly against the Novatians and all who shared their heresy: "*Aiunt se Domino deferre reverentiam, cui soli remittendorum criminum potestatem reservent. Immo nulli majorem injuriam faciunt quam qui eius volunt mandata rescindere, commissum munus refundere. Nam cum ipse in evangelio suo dixerit Dominus Jesus: Accipite . . . quis est ergo qui magis honoret, utrum qui mandatis obtemperet an qui resistit? Ecclesia in utroque servat obedientiam, ut peccatum et alligat et relaxat—ius hoc solis permissum sacerdotibus habet*" (*De poenit.*, I, 2, 6–8).

c) Combining John xx, 21 ff. with Luke xxiv, 47 ff., we can see clearly how the remission of sins is the fruit of the Passion. Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead so that remission of sins could be preached in His Name. "*Traditus est propter delicta nostra et resurrexit propter resurrectionem nostram*" (Rom. iv, 25). Remission of sins is, therefore, one of the chief purposes of the sacerdotal office, and the confessional should be particularly dear to the priest and an object of his special care. For chiefly there his co-operation in the work of redemption becomes a prac-

tical reality, and chiefly in it the peace of God is imparted to human souls. Therefore, also, the priest should bear the hardships of the confessional willingly, should suffer with the Redeemer as an assistant in the work of redemption.

The priests of the Old Testament could not cure leprosy, but merely confirm a cure. The priests of the New Testament have the power actually to heal a leprosy far worse than the physical disease.

XIV. CHRISTUS CONSOLATOR

"The disciples therefore were glad, when they saw the Lord" (John xx, 20).

Among the points of meditation to be considered lovingly and contemplatively in connection with the mysteries of the Resurrection, St. Ignatius, in his booklet on the Spiritual Exercises, names Christ's office of Consoler: "*Speculari officium consolandi, quod Christus Dominus noster exercet, et comparando, quomodo solent amici amicos consolari*" (Fourth Week). This is indeed one of the most beautiful and stirring traits in the life of the Glorified Saviour and deserves special consideration.

1. The Lord Consoles

a) Our Lord and Master does not withhold comfort and joy, but shares it with His followers. That is a sure sign of true friendship. "Love consists in mutual

communication" (St. Ignatius, Introduction to the Meditation on Love). *"Et mea omnia tua sunt, et tua mea sunt"* (John xvii, 10).

b) We observe how death commonly severs, or at least loosens, the bonds of love and friendship. But the love of the Lord for His own has remained the same; if anything, it has become more tender and cordial.

c) Even the circumstance that He has ascended the throne, that He has exchanged the garb of servitude with the royal mantle of transfiguration, has not produced the slightest change in His condescending love.

And all of this in spite of the many acts of disloyalty, of weakness, after their denial, flight and infidelity! All these happenings have not extinguished His love for His disciples.

II. The Lord Comforts All Who are in Need of Consolation

He comforts the souls of the just, who have awaited His coming for years in the nether world. At last the hour has struck, and their exile is at an end. He carries the joyful message to them personally.

He comforts His holy Mother, who deserves this consolation more than anyone else. He has, indeed, entrusted her, on the cross, to the disciple whom He loved; but He remains her Child, and to console the sorrowing Mother is a filial duty.

He comforts Magdalen, who had proved so faithful when the others failed Him. He changes her tears into pearls of joy.

He comforts the pious women with His friendly *avete!,* consoles Peter, the disciples on the road to Emmaus, in the hall, all His brethren. The entire Church celebrates its first Easter with joy and consolation.

III. The Lord Comforts Truly

He brings true and substantial comfort to His own. According to a profound explanation of St. Ignatius (cfr. Rule concerning the Discernment of Spirits), this comfort consists in a sensible increase of faith, hope, and charity. The Lord re-establishes their faith by giving them the certainty that He has risen, that everything has occurred precisely as He had foretold, that all their doubts and fears were foolish and vain. He offers them the clearest and most incontrovertible proofs. Once more everything is as clear as the sun and bright as day, and that causes comfort and joy.

He lifts up and confirms their hope, which had been broken so utterly against the *scandalum crucis* that they saw no way out. Now He comes and fulfills all of His promises. "You shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy" (John xvi, 20). How the words *Nolite timere! Pax vobis!* falling from His lips, inspire confidence! Now all is well again!

He quickens their charity. Their love for Him had not died, and now, after all these stirring proofs of His kindness, it flares up in a mighty flame. They could not but love such a Master!

And with faith, hope, and charity, man's sweetest possession enters their hearts: joy and peace, a holiday

comfort such as they had not yet experienced. *"Gavisi sunt ergo discipuli viso Domino"* (l. c). Courage and energy are reawakened at the same time. They are firmly resolved to follow Him, to take up the Apostolic career, to continue His work.

This Paschal joy had not lost its light and brilliance when the Apostles preached and wrote, but is reflected in their utterances (cfr. Jno. i, 1; Acts iii, 15; x, 40 ff.).

IV. He Consoles His Followers Always

a) The Lord continues to play this rôle of comforter in His Church, chiefly in the tabernacle. What an immeasurable volume of consolation emanates from it day by day, hour by hour, from the simplest word of comfort to the ecstatic delight granted to chosen souls!

There is not a seat in church that cannot tell of consolation received, not a confessional, not a communion railing that has not been a witness thereof.

Consolation radiates from every crucifix and cross in the home, on and in the churches and hospitals; from every statue of the Sacred Heart: Behold the Heart that has so loved men!

b) And as at that time these scenes of consolation were enacted without the Jews, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Romans, a Caiphas, a Pilate having even the slightest intimation thereof, so in our times the heavenly acts of consolation, divine manifestations,

take place in the Catholic churches, the while the world outside rushes on its way in utter ignorance of what is happening.

c) This process of spiritual consolation, this approach of souls to Christ, is of great importance precisely for the priest. He may not remain indifferent to it. It is not a good sign if the priest himself no longer has such hours of consolation, if the Lord remains far from him. Some *obex* or other is interfering.

Consolations are also the very best protection against sin, which is an *aversio a Deo* and a *conversio ad creaturam*. How can I turn from the Lord if I have come to realize how sweet He is! How can I turn towards the creature after having tasted something infinitely sweeter! Divine consolation removes all desire for earthly comfort.

But it is not the purpose of these acts of consolation that we rest content with them and let them be the end of our effort. They are merely indications that God is pleased with us. Their purpose is to strengthen us in laboring for God. Onward, with renewed courage!

XV. THE OFFICE OF THE PRIEST AS COMFORTER

I. Thou Shalt Comfort!

a) One of the principal duties of the priest is to impart consolation, and there is probably no more beautiful formula for the vocation of the shepherd

of souls than this—to be a comforter after the pattern of the Divine Master.

How much disconsolate misery reigns in our large cities, in their filthy slums, their stuffy, dingy tenements! What misery, too, out in the country! Seminarian, let the holy resolve ripen in your heart on the great day of your ordination: I will be a comforter! Let that be your all-embracing programme as a priest!

"The spirit of the Lord is upon me because the Lord hath anointed me; He hath sent me to preach to the meek, to heal the contrite of heart and to preach a release to the captives, and deliverance to them that are shut up . . . to appoint to the mourners of Sion, and to give them a crown for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, a garment of praise for the spirit of grief" (Is. lxi, 1–3).

This is your holy, your exalted mission! For this have such great riches and graces been laid into your anointed hands!

Ah, if the Master Himself came and walked through these abodes of misery, what comfort would accompany His coming and going! But He does not come Himself—He sends *you* as His representative.

b) There is no lack of opportunity for you to console. You should be a comforter:

In the confessional. The confessional should not be a tribunal in which sentence of damnation is pronounced, not a torture-chamber, but a place of heavenly consolation. Oh, raise up the poor, fallen, puzzled disciples; make their confession easy; help them lov-

ingly; speak a friendly word to them; give them courage (*Nolite timere!*); do not let one single soul leave you uncomforted, despairing, cursing.

In the pulpit. Why always scold, reprimand, threaten, and play the schoolmaster? Why not comfort your hearers? Everyone of them needs consolation more than anything else. How sorely they are often disappointed; they leave the church unconsoled, embittered, discouraged. When you prepare your sermon, let your first thought be: I will tell them something kind, something that will bring joy to their hearts, raise them up, give them joy and hope. If then a comforter, who is ordinarily gentle, occasionally speaks sternly and seriously, the effect of his words will be heightened.

In the church. The church should be a place of comfort and holy joy. Therefore, do all you can to make the services beautiful, attractive, rich in consolation, and spare no reasonable expense when there is question of purchases for the church, of rendering observance of the feasts more beautiful (the Christmas crib, the Holy Sepulchre, etc.).

In the rectory. Your house should be open to all as a place of refuge, where all may find comfort and assistance. It would be a pity if the rectory were, as it sometimes is, the most dreaded house in the congregation.

At the sick-bed. No one is in greater need of consolation than the sick. As long as one is well and strong, one can bear adversities fairly well. But that

is all changed when one lies abed, ill and weak and miserable, lonesome, sad, and perhaps forsaken. Then one has special need of comfort and encouragement. Go, carry consolation to the sick, and if you can, aid them physically and materially!

Among the poor. Oh, be kind to the poor! Do not be niggardly or harsh, and do not let zealous members of the St. Vincent de Paul Conference—least of all the Salvation Army—put you to shame! Secure employment for the poor, a chance to earn a living. Get them recommendations!

The priest should not return to his house from whatever errand may have called him away, without imparting comfort to someone, though it be only by way of a greeting, a friendly word, a kindly smile.

II. How Should You Comfort Others?

The consolation you offer should primarily be true, substantial comfort for the soul. The most profound reasons why people are often so unhappy and disconsolate are:

a) Lack of faith. They are confused by false assertions, by the spoken and printed phrases employed by infidels, and are tortured by skepticism. Nothing gives them greater inward consolation than if someone helps them out of their doubts and objections and strengthens their faith.

b) Lack of hope and trust in God. They have lost assurance in Divine Providence. Show them the rôle suffering plays in the plan of divine government, tell

them how the most beautiful flowers of heroic virtue sprout from the soil of suffering, and that there can be no martyrs without persecution.

c) Lack of charity, or love, which can dispense so much happiness. Love will return as soon as the light of faith and the warmth of hope have re-entered the soul.

What glorious words of comfort are contained in the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the devotion to the Sorrowful Mother, to the Five Holy Wounds, and in the Way of the Cross! Practice them! Ah, what a comforter a pious priest may be for the entire congregation!

III. Prerequisites

a) If I wish to comfort others, I myself must have consolation, must know where to find it and how to draw it *"de fontibus Salvatoris"* (Is. xii, 3).

Jesus can comfort so wonderfully because he is *"Deus totius consolationis"* (2 Cor. i, 3).

Therefore it is necessary that the priest experience consolation in his prayers and himself realize how sweet the Lord is. A lukewarm priest, wanting in the power of faith and in prayer, cannot be a true comforter.

b) If I wish to comfort others, I myself must enjoy the peace of God. If the heavy burden of unatoned guilt bears down on the soul, the heart is straitened, the eye is dull, the voice is hoarse and raw. If you would be a comforter of others, keep yourself pure and free from sin.

c) If you would comfort others, you must have mastery over yourself, control your moods, whims, and passions; you must strip your nature and conduct of all that is rough, harsh, irritable, repulsive, because it awes and frightens others; you must know how to conceal your own sorrow. A moody, melancholy, sulking priest is a poor comforter.

d) If you would exercise the office of comforter, you must above all be unselfish, *i. e.,* cast off your own dear ego. If one always thinks of himself and asks: "What do I get out of it?" he cannot be a good consoler. Egotism renders a person cold, reticent, self-centered, unsympathetic. Ah, even among the clergy there are such egotists who remain cold and indifferent to all the misery and distress of their poor lambs.

e) If I would be a comforter according to the example set by the Divine Master, I must have a good, noble, gentle, magnanimous heart. Therefore, I must remodel my heart according to the pattern of His Most Sacred Heart. "Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thine!" Hence the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus holds a very special position in the priest's life and meditations.

XVI. THOMAS

The episode in which St. Thomas plays so prominent a rôle affords an insight into the frame of mind dominating the Apostles. They had evidently been scattered, as the Lord Jesus had predicted: "Behold, the hour cometh, and it is now come, that you

shall be scattered, every man to his own" (John xvi, 32).

Gradually the news of the Saviour's appearances had brought the Apostles together again, with the exception of Thomas, who had given up all hope of the Lord's return.

A. *The Doubting Thomas*

"Now Thomas, one of the twelve, who is called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came" (John xx, 24).

I. His Character

According to the Gospel, Thomas appears as a determined and courageous man. It is he who at a critical moment had exhorted the others courageously: "Let us also go, that we may die with Him" (John xi, 16). And none of the twelve carried the standard of the faith farther than he in later life.

His brooding disposition, however, inclined him to skepticism, and his hard-headedness well-nigh became disastrous for him.

Thus this clerical type also was represented among the first twelve.

II. His Incredulity

How did Thomas come to refuse his assent to the fact of the Resurrection with such stubbornness? To

understand his attitude we must hark back to the Lord's discourses at the Last Supper.

"Whither I go you know, and the way you know," He said (John xiv, 4). No, Thomas interjects, "We know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?"—thereby disclosing his brooding mind.

The Saviour had said shortly before: "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I shall go, and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and will take you to Myself" (John xiv, 2–3). Thomas seized upon these words and held fast to them. Therefore, he reasoned, the Lord is not risen; He is with the Father, and will return later from Heaven. That is *his* theory; he holds to it firmly and therefore, with the others, refuses to believe the report of the pious women.

Up to this point he was no more guilty than the rest. But he goes farther. Doubt concerning the report of the holy women may have been pardonable, but later, when Peter had spoken, he should have believed, as the others did. Instead, he separates himself from the family of the Apostles, and thus fails to be present at the Saviour's first manifestation, and forfeits a great grace.

But worse still. When his fellow-Apostles, radiant with joy, tell him they had seen the Lord, had spoken and eaten with Him, had touched the marks of His wounds, Thomas stiffly holds to his theory, goes so far as to reject all the evidence, and finally answers all their efforts at dispelling his doubts with the words: "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails

and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe" (John x, 25).

Thomas does not indeed deny that they had seen something, but that what they had seen was really the Lord, *i. e.,* His true body. It was, he thought, His spirit, a phantasm without flesh and blood, just as the other disciples had also thought at first. Therefore he says: "Except I shall see. . . ." He insists upon palpable proofs. However justified this demand was in itself, it was arrogant of Thomas to reject the testimony of the other Apostles, who had had convincing proofs and had not shown themselves unduly credulous.

What the entire Church, its highest representative (Peter) and the bishops (the Apostles) declare to be true, we may and must accept and abide by.

Various circumstances favored Thomas' skepticism. First, the uniqueness of the apparitions of the Lord. He appeared and disappeared suddenly. No one asked Him whence He came or whither He went. The former confidential companionship was a thing of the past.

Hence, the Apostles could not say to Thomas: Come with us, we shall bring thee to Him! They knew not where Jesus was. They told Thomas how the Lord had suddenly appeared in their midst, the doors being locked, how He had joined the disciples on their way to Emmaus as a stranger and had vanished after the breaking of the bread—but it only confirmed him in his stubborn opinion that it was not the Lord Himself, but a specter.

III. The Question of Guilt

That Thomas, in spite of everything that may be said to exculpate him, offended grievously, is placed beyond doubt by the reprimand administered by the Lord. One must not seek to minimize the Apostle's guilt, which again provides us with a standard for measuring the Lord's kindness.

Wrong and sinful was:

a) His stubborn unbelief. He not only refused to believe that the others had seen the Lord, but also the fact of the Resurrection itself, and looked upon it all as a phantastic dream, declaring emphatically he would trust only his own senses. He is not content with moral certainty, but demands ocular evidence (*"Nisi videro!"*), thereby excluding faith. And how hard-headed is his unbelief! He opposes his stubborn *"ego autem contra!"* to the unanimous testimony of the Apostles. That is not merely conceited, but sinful. He refuses to submit his understanding to clear and perfectly adequate testimony, and thereby in effect destroys the basis of faith which rests on authority. He deems himself wiser and keener than the entire college of the Apostles, wiser than the Church.

b) In His arrogance he goes so far as to wish to dictate to the Lord the conditions under which he is willing to believe. The human witnesses do not satisfy him. The Lord Himself must appear for his exclusive benefit, and even then he will not be content with seeing Him; he insists upon touching Him. He demands a private revelation and declares he will submit to the

teaching office of the Church only on these conditions.

c) Wrong and sinful, moreover, was the scandal he gave to his fellow-Apostles and to the women whose testimony and pleas he ignored and whom he grievously saddened by his attitude. He marred the Paschal joy of the whole community and struck a discordant note in the joyous concert.

d) The danger to which he exposed himself by his separatist conduct is obviated only by the incomprehensible kindness of the Master.

Many have been pushed into wrong paths by such obstinacy and have *not* found their way back to the Church.

IV. Conclusions

This entire episode is replete with useful and significant lessons. St. Gregory says: *"Plus nobis Thomae infidelitas ad fidem quam fides credentium discipulorum profuit; quia dum ille ad fidem palpando reducitur, nostra mens omni dubitatione postposita in fide solidatur"* (*Hom. in Evang.*, 26).

a) All separatist efforts in the Church are evil. *"Vae soli!"* applies to them also. They have at all times been the beginning of heresies, which are naught but wayward exaggerations of private opinion over and above the *fides communis*. This conceited and self-centered attitude always proves a deplorable lack of the sense of solidarity, which is of such importance in the Church of God, and breeds dissension and division.

b) In the small circle of the Apostles there is, in

addition to the traitor and the apostate, also the first doubter. It was more difficult to convince Thomas than it was later to convince the people. Thus it is even today. The people often have a firmer faith than theologians and conceited scholars. How many doubting Thomases are there not among the clergy, who, wrapped up in preconceived notions, find fault with and criticize every miracle and every extraordinary occurrence, dispose of them with a shrug of the shoulders, and pretend to be strong, upright spirits the while they are in truth only petty.

This sort of mental attitude frequently spoils the priest's life, cripples the spirit of prayer and joy in labor, poisons his mood and renders him sulky, restive, and uncompanionable. Worse still, priests of this type spoil others, who would be happy and edified over a decision of the Church or a marvelous occurrence within her pale, did not a disgruntled grumbler, another Thomas, sadden and disturb them by his skeptical objections and faultfinding.

How easy it is for such moods to arise in connection with the Eucharistic mystery of the Resurrection: "Except I see . . . touch" "I will not believe."

Visus, tactus, gustus in te fallitur,
Sed auditu solo tuto creditur:
Credo quidquid dixit Dei filius:
Nil hoc veritatis verbo verius.

c) An extremely evil antitype of Thomas, who wishes to see, not to believe, are the representatives of modern infidel science and criticism. They deny what

others, eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses, attest, but would be highly indignant if one did not believe their own unsupported statements. In their conceit they are incomparably smarter and more enlightened than all the popes, doctors of the Church, and theologians, although they are but pygmies in comparison with such intellectual giants as Augustine or Thomas Aquinas. They look down upon the "faithful" with a supercilious smile, and yet, how far from scientific these gentlemen frequently are! Of course, credulity is wrong, but this aprioristic skepticism and morbid fear of miracles is at the least equally unscientific. Whoever truly aims at the truth and seeks it, must be as neutral as a tongue on a scale. Only then can one weigh things calmly, and separate truth and error.

B. The Believing Thomas

I. The Master

"After eight days again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them" (John xx, 26).

a) *Postponement of the Apparition.* The Apostles would probably have been pleased if the Lord had reappeared immediately and convinced Thomas of his error. But they had to be patient. The Lord postponed his coming a full eight days. During this time the unbelieving Apostle's irritation was allayed and the grace of God was quietly at work in his heart.

In the beginning the delay seems to have augmented his obstinacy. He experienced something like a victory.

But gradually, in the face of the firm assurance of his fellow-Apostles and their perseverance in faith, he begins to doubt his own convictions and to experience qualms of conscience: "If the Lord were to appear, what should I say? How could I justify my attitude?" Thomas loves the Master and would give his life for a sight of Him. Therefore, he again attaches himself to the community and thereby obtains this great grace. Now he is prepared.

How frequently does not something similar occur in the life of the seminarian, the priest, the religious! For a long time he takes a wrong attitude, toys with the thought of leaving his vocation, and the like. 'Tis well for us that the Lord is so kind. A triduum, the Retreat, a great holyday brings the Lord Himself, and He guides Thomas back to the path.

Post octo dies! Again it was Sunday, when the Apostles commemorated the Resurrection for the first time.

b) *The Apparition.* The Lord appears precisely in the same manner as the first time. "Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in their midst, and said: Peace be to you" (John xx, 26). Thomas was to be made to realize how accurately the report of his fellow-Apostles corresponded to the truth. They rejoice, all but one—Thomas himself, who is struck with fear. He feels himself guilty, in spite of his joy at seeing the Lord.

c) *The Proof.* "Then He saith to Thomas: Put in thy finger hither, and see My hands; and bring hither thy hand, and put it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing."

He calls Thomas to Him, without a word of reproach, and urges him to convince himself. It is the echo of his own demand. The Lord thereby shows His omniscience.

The Lord hears our evil remarks, reads our unholy thoughts, and knows our rebellious moods.

He offers the Apostle a grace different from any extended till then to anyone else. *"Excogita Dominatoris clementiam, qualiter etiam pro una anima ostendit seipsum vulnera habentem et accedit, ut salvet unum"* (Chrysost., *Hom. in Io.*, 86).

Put thy hand into my side! *"Magnum certe fuit vulnus illud sacratissimi lateris, in quo non digitum, sed manum mittere debebat"* (Ludolphus).

It is a priest who first lays his hand into this sacred wound leading to the Heart of the Saviour. The Master wishes the priest to come near to His Heart. The priest should delve deep into this wound, reveal to the people the treasures concealed in the Most Sacred Heart, and explain to them its mysteries.

d) *The Lord's Kindness.* Thomas had deserved punishment and serious rebuke. But the Lord displays an almost incomprehensible kindness towards him. We see no cloud on His brow, no threatening fire in His eyes, no coldness or harshness in His demeanor. Instead of speaking harsh words of reproach, He enters upon the Apostle's demand, inviting him to put his hand in the sacred wound of his side. The words, "Be not faithless, but believing," are the sole rebuke He utters.

We have here a wonderful demonstration of Christ's inexhaustible love, His incomprehensible meekness and

considerateness, His marvelous moderation and prudence, which turns and disposes everything so that the Apostle's pitiable confusion not only does not result in injury, but in a strengthening of the faith for all and a complete change for Thomas.

The Lord wills not humiliation, but instruction and improvement, not the assertion of His authority, satisfaction for the affront offered Him, but only the welfare of the sick, self-willed child. Consequently, there is but one brief word of reprimand. As a result, His entire demeanor is all the more adapted to attract to Himself the soul that had gone astray and to move it in its innermost depths.

The entire scene is an example to bishops, pastors, superiors of religious communities, showing them in a marvelous manner how to correct a subordinate deserving of punishment.

If it is done in an offensive manner, atonement will indeed be obtained, but the wound will remain. It can and should be done so that, as in this instance, everything needful is said and yet no wound is struck, complete correction is assured and even greater devotion and contrition is attained.

Woe unto Thomas if he had had to deal with a hot-headed superior! How a man of that type would have taken him to task, oppressed the sensitive soul of the Apostle, possibly driven him to complete apostasy! It is easy to cause a permanent and incurable rupture by such rough treatment.

The Lord acts differently. With Him all is love, for-

bearance, thoughtfulness, meekness. How marvelously He knows how to correct, to rebuke, and withal to preserve love, aye, to increase it.

e) *Not a Private Manifestation.* The Lord might have appeared to Thomas alone, as He had to Peter. But He did not.

Thomas is to receive this grace only in the community, so that he may observe what a great grace vocation is, that he may realize this grace is not granted him as an individual, but as a fellow and companion of the Apostles. The sense of fellowship in the community too is strengthened.

Moreover, all the disciples are to be witnesses of the Master's love and to learn of Him how to treat the weak. This scene, therefore, is of great importance for all. They are shown by an impressive example how indulgent and kind the Lord is even towards one who has offended, and thus they learn an important lesson for their Apostolic office as shepherds and judges.

The Apostles were witnesses of Thomas' unbelief and scandal; they are now also to be witnesses of his faith and conversion, to be strengthened by it and rejoice in it. He must make reparation for the scandal before the entire community.

In this manner a public penance, if imposed with proper forbearance, may at times produce general edification. Likewise, the custom of the *culpa* observed in religious communities, and the chapter of guilt, may be a source of much good.

Great, too, is the edification and the general joy if a

priest who has gone astray is converted, makes a public retraction, is received with kindness, and makes amends for his sin with redoubled zeal.

Therefore, too, special significance attaches to retreats made in common. The participants may edify one another and thus make amends for the harm they have done by bad example.

II. The Disciple

"Thomas answered, and said to Him: My Lord and my God" (John xx, 28).

a) We do not know whether Thomas, following the Saviour's invitation, touched the sacred marks of the wounds. Possibly he, on his part, may have been deterred by reverence and diffidence. Probably the Lord seized his hand and, confirming His own words, laid it in the wounds. Thomas, deeply stirred by what he saw and heard, and overwhelmed by the Master's kindness, fell on his knees crying: "My Lord and my God!"

b) My Lord and my God! What a wealth of meaning in these few words: faith, humility, reverence, love, contrition, shame, gratitude, devotion! All of these emotions burst forth like the blocked stream of a half-choked spring, suddenly cleared.

My Lord and my God! An act of faith coming from the uttermost depths of the soul. Thomas not merely sees his beloved Master, but recognizes in the Risen Saviour his God and Lord. He publicly and solemnly professes his faith, not only in the humanity, but also in the divinity of Jesus Christ.

My Lord and my God! A manly atonement for the wrong committed and an amendment for the scandal given.

My Lord and my God! Recognition of the great grace received, an expression of confidence of being forgiven, a cry of sincere gratitude and love, not in the soft phraseology of our day, but a simple, vigorous expression of reverence characteristic of the early Church in its relation to the Lord.

My Lord and my God! These words contain everything! They say: O Lord, how could I be so blind? How could I conduct myself so miserably? How could I be so self-willed and stubborn? Oh Lord, forgive! Henceforth I will be all Thine, and will atone for my mistake by greater zeal.

It is the *suscipe* of a strong, confused heart that has been wholly won back and that is prepared to meet all struggles and sacrifices for the future. Thomas now and for all time belongs wholly to the Master; he will be one of the great Apostles of the world and will carry the Gospel even farther than Paul. Then, too, the *"eamus, ut moriamur cum eo"* will be fulfilled.

Like Peter's fall to Peter, Thomas' unbelief became a source of blessing to Thomas, thanks to the love of the Master, which in his case also evidenced the marvelous prudence, moderation, kindness, knowledge of human nature which the true guide of souls possesses.

Since Thomas was not present when Jesus granted the Apostles the power to forgive sins, he probably received that power at this time by participation and transference—the first instance of such a transmission

of Apostolic privileges. Matthias offers the second example.

c) Thomas is properly the type of a converted soul, totally transformed by the realization of divine benevolence. The ice melts, the fog is dispelled, knowledge of self, contrition, shame, the will to make amends for everything, vigorously assert themselves.

One may recognize here also the effect upon the priest of a sincere devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. As soon as he has overcome prejudices and inhibitions and boldly puts his hand into the wound of Christ's side, he will realize this effect.

The experience of Ignatius of Loyola was similar to that of Thomas: suddenly Christ stood before him like an apparition from another world, as the true King and General. *Suscipe, Domine!*

What a glorious prayer is this "My Lord and my God!" at the close of a good Retreat, when a wavering, confused sacerdotal heart has once more recognized the Lord and turned to Him with whole-souled devotion.

How many an unbelieving Thomas in the Church has had a similar experience! Animated with critical reserve, full of prejudices and ingrained conceit and obstinate pride of knowledge, he has opposed the Church in its visible head. But when a man of this type finds his way to Rome and, admitted to private audience, suddenly stands before the gentle figure of the Pope and sees and understands that here is truly the Vicar of Christ, and that naught but love and wisdom have directed the ordained measures, then bitter stub-

bornness melts, and he falls upon his knees, a believing and a changed soul.

III. The Instruction

"Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and have believed" (John xx, 29).

a) *The Lord Instructs Thomas*

1. The Lord does not praise Thomas' confession as He had praised that made by Peter. Rather His words reveal a mild rebuke, clothed in an expression which robs it of asperity. The Lord merely establishes the facts: Because thou hast seen, thou believest; but it would have been better if thou hadst believed without having seen.

Belief had been forced from him as it were by sense perception. Whoever grounds his faith on seeing with the eyes of the body, on temporal and visible things, builds on a frail foundation. "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen, are eternal" (2 Cor. iv, 18).

Therefore, faith which is still in need of seeing, of the aid of the senses, is not a completely saving faith. Only that faith is saving which rests exclusively on the word and its intrinsic power of proof. Thomas had not

yet reached this step in faith—hence the reprimand administered by the Lord.

Faith founded on compelling evidence is without merit. Everybody can and must believe evidential proof. Only blind faith, the free gift of a confiding will, is great and meritorious.

The Lord's admonition is delicate and gentle, but it is also clear and unmistakable.

2. The words of the Master also contained a mild reprimand for the others. They, too, had not believed at first, and had refused to accept the testimony of the holy women, though they had later believed that of Peter. Thomas, however, had repudiated even the latter.

3. "Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed." Can one really speak of faith in this case? Is not "faith the evidence of things that appear not" (Hebr. xi, 1)? St. Augustine declares: "*Fides est credere, quod non vides*" (*Tract. in Ioan.*, 40). But the same Saint solves the difficulty when he declares: "*Aliud Thomas vidit et palpavit corpore et aliud credidit corde. . . . Hominem namque seu humanitatem vidit et tetigit, et Deum seu deitatem (quae in praesenti videri non potest) credidit. Dicendo enim 'Dominus meus' humanam naturam, cui datum est totius creaturae dominium, dicendo 'Deus meus' divinam, quae omnia condidit, confessus est unum eundem Deum et Dominum*" (*Tract. in Ioan.*, 121).

Hence what Thomas had was faith, but it would have been more meritorious if he had believed in the Resurrection and the divinity of Christ without the testimony of his eyes.

b) *The Lord Instructs the Church of the Future*

"Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed" (John xx, 29).

Viewing the weak faith of the Apostles in those days from the vantage point of his own mature faith, John in after years must have been pained and somewhat ashamed. For this reason he does not fail to transmit to posterity those memorable words of the Saviour, which should be a source of comfort and strength to all who have not seen Him as the Apostles saw Him.

1. For us, too, they are *words of comfort. "Laetificat autem valde, quod sequitur 'Beati qui non viderunt et crediderunt,' in qua sententia nos specialiter signati sumus, qui eum quem carne non vidimus, mente tenemus"* (Greg., *Hom. in Evang.*, 26).

We have not had the good fortune to see the Saviour, yet we kneel in adoration, as though He stood before us. That is the merit of the generations to come. The Lord has marked the moral value of their faith with exceeding clearness and beauty.

We do not exist for ourselves, but for God, for His glorification. Nothing, however, glorifies Him more than this not-seeing, yet believing, this living by faith. True, man desires to see and to touch, and is destined to do so (*visio beatifica*), but this seeing must be earned by believing.

Truly, we would profit more if we could lay our hand in His side; but He prefers the silent, humble veneration practiced principally before the tabernacle.

True, it would be sweet and beautiful if we, too, like

some divinely favored souls, could see and, as it were, touch the Lord in the Sacrament. But 'tis better so: better for Him, who in this way receives greater honor and glory, and better for us, since we acquire greater merit for eternity. The time will come when the words will be spoken: "Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed."

Plagas sicut Thomas non intueor,
Deum tamen meum te confiteor:
Fac me tibi semper magis credere,
In te spem habere, te diligere.

The modern rationalistic generation, weak in faith, forfeits this blessing. It lacks the requisite love of truth and humility.

2. They are *words of instruction,* exceedingly important for the Catholic conception of life and the true notion of faith.

a) It is the privilege of the first witnesses to see and to touch. Those who come later must accept their testimony and have no right to demand any better warrant than this very testimony of the *testes praeordinati.* All our knowledge of history is based on this law.

b) Examination of the grounds of faith is proper; it is even commanded. For faith is to be a *rationabile obsequium.* This examination, however, has its restrictions.

To believe is to hold something as true on the strength of dependable testimony, which takes the place of the testimony of one's own eyes. To wish to base faith on the testimony of the senses would eliminate faith. If anyone nevertheless insists upon sense percep-

tion and sets up conditions for God to observe, he offends against a fundamental law of salvation. If God wishes to reveal anything, it is for Him to determine the manner and method of revelation. But the divinely willed manner is not to grant revelations to each soul individually, but to select particular instruments, through whom God transmits His revelations: the Patriarchs, the Prophets, then Christ, the Apostles, etc. (cfr. Hebr. i, 1 ff.). It is the duty of the others to hear the divinely authorized witnesses and to accept their declarations as divine revelations. "He that heareth you, heareth Me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me, despiseth Him that sent Me" (Luke x, 16).

c) The blessing pronounced by the Lord applies, therefore, to those who hear with faith. He peers into the future, sees all the peoples of the earth who hear and accept the joyful message. To all of them applies the declaration: "Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed."

"We all have part in this great and glorious beatification" (Chrys., *Hom. in asc. Dom.*, v, 5).

Our faith is founded on the message delivered by the Apostles, which message, in turn, rests on Christ's revelation (cfr. 1 Jno. i, 1; Acts. x, 37 ff.; xiii, 30).

We cannot conceive of better witnesses than the Apostles. "This is that disciple who giveth testimony of these things . . . and we know that his testimony is true" (John xxi, 24).

Let us notice how charmingly Ludolph of Saxony describes the closing of that momentous evening:

"Stat igitur [Dominus] cum eis per aliquam morulam loquens de regno Dei consolatoria. Stant et ipsi cum eo in lactitia magna audientes illa verba excelsa et aspicientes faciem eius plenam gaudio ac decore et gratia. Attende bene eos familiariter circumcirca stantes! Sta et tu reverenter et verecunde, sed gaudenter, a longe tamen, si forte misericordia motus faciat te vocari, licet immeritum! Tandem dicit eis, quod in Galilaeam vadant et quod ibi eis apparebit, sicut promiserat, et benedictione data discessit ab eis. Ipsi vero remanserunt, ut prius, de ipso famelici et sitibundi, sed plurimum confortati."

XVII. THE FIVE SACRED WOUNDS

Why does the Lord retain the marks of the wounds in His glorified body?

1. As *convincing proof* that He is truly risen and that His glorified body is the same that hung on the cross. The Lord Himself points to this motive: "Behold My hands and My feet!" They are marked by something very distinctive, the marks of the wounds. "*Ad dubitantium enim corda sananda vulnerum servata sunt vestigia et ideo vulnerum cicatrices ostendit, ut dubietatis et infidelitatis eorum vulnus sanaret*" (Ludolphus). Thomas declared he would recognize the Master by His wounds, and he did recognize Him.

The Saviour retains these marks for all eternity

2. As *marks of victory*, symbols of triumph. They are marks of His victory over death and suffering. At

the same time they show how highly He values His Passion, since He retains them and preserves them in radiant beauty. Therein lies an encouragement for us to accept suffering willingly, so that we may in glory bear similar marks of honor, the scars of wounds suffered for our King. *"Stigmata Domini Jesu in corpore meo porto"* (Gal. vi, 17). According to St. Augustine (*De Civit. Dei,* I, XXII, 20) the martyrs, following the example set by Christ, will also retain the wounds and scars of their martyrdom, as marks of honor, in Heaven.

3. The wounds are to be a *lasting monument to His Passion,* a constant reminder of the great achievement of the Redemption. The vastness of the struggle should not be forgotten in the glory of the triumph. Therefore, the sight of Christ's sacred wounds should constantly incite us to gratitude and contrition. They, in particular, show Him to us as our Redeemer.

4. He retains the wounds as marks of *His office of Mediator,* as an influential title of His office as advocate with the Father. For He is with Him and serves as *"advocatus noster"* (1 John ii, 1). He shows the Father the marks of His wounds and thus appeases His wrath. They are like unto a gleaming rainbow of peace arched over the sinful world. We may pray trustingly to the Father: *"Protector noster aspice Deus et respice in faciem Christi tui!"* (Ps. lxxxiii, 10). *Intra vulnera tua absconde me!*

Frederick von Spee prays: "O my God, immerse me in the blood of the wounds of Jesus, and with it write

my name in the book of life, that I may praise Thee with Him in the Holy Spirit for all eternity. Amen." (Golden Book of Virtue).

5. Christ preserves His wounds also as *inducements to love and veneration.* Nothing reminds the pious Christian more effectively of His love than the sacred wounds. They are wonderfully eloquent. What a touching part is played in the lives of the Saints and of the Christian people by the devotion to the sacred wounds! What an admonition to love Christ, who has loved us, is voiced especially by the wound in the side! *"Ostendit latus, ut provocaret ad amandum, quasi diceret: Videte latus apertum, cor vulneratum, ut videatis, quantum dilexerim vos, ut et vos me diligatis"* (Ludolphus).

"Ecce in manibus meis descripsi te" (Is. xlviii, 16).

In how entirely different a spirit will the priest, after the renewal of the Sacrifice on the cross, pray the *ecce ego* and the five Our Fathers to gain the indulgence if he vividly pictures to his mind the five wounds of Jesus and kisses them in spirit!

6. The Saviour retains the marks of the wounds in order to *show them to His enemies at the judgment*, so that they may see that He, on His part, did everything to save them and that it is entirely their own fault that He must now pronounce sentence upon them. *"Videbunt, in quem transfixerunt"* (John xix, 37). From these wounds shafts of light will dart at the wicked, rays of grace will flow upon the good (St. Bernard, *Serm. in Cant.*, 61. Cfr. also St. Augustine, *Symb. ad Catech.*, l. ii, 8, and St. Bede on Luke xxiv, 40).

VII. CHRIST'S APPARITIONS IN GALILEE

I. ON TO GALILEE!

"Go, tell My brethren that they go into Galilee; there they shall see Me" (Matt. xxviii, 10). "Go, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee; there you shall see Him as He told you" (Mark xvi, 7).

1. It is, of course, readily understood that Galilee was to become the *principal scene of Christ's glorified life*. His public life had been lived there chiefly. Galilee was the home of the Eleven and of most of the disciples and holy women, who naturally longed to return there. There, too, lived most of the disciples, who, broken in spirit by the happenings in Jerusalem, stood in urgent need of such encouragement as only the visible presence of the Master could give. That this purpose was achieved is proven by the fact that some five hundred disciples were present at the appearance on the mountain (1 Cor. xv, 6). The very fact that the Lord shows Himself here also, far from the scene of the Resurrection, provides added proof of the truth of the Resurrection.

Moreover, Galilee offered greater quiet and immunity from molestation by the Sanhedrin. In Jerusalem the Apostles would necessarily have lived in constant fear. Tradition has it that Joseph of Arimathea was

taken prisoner. Furthermore, the disciples could earn a livelihood more readily in Galilee than in Jerusalem, and could better organize the nascent Church.

Possibly the Lord also intended, by His departure, to stifle the excitement prevailing in Jerusalem. He does not wish His Resurrection to arouse too much public attention. To visualize this consideration one need but think of the later fate of the Church in the catacombs, spending three hundred years in concealment. "*Non venit regnum Dei cum observatione*" (Luke xvii, 20). There is not to be a victorious expedition but rather a quiet activity, like unto that of the leaven.

2. It was necessary, however, that the activity in Galilee be preceded by the manifestations in Jerusalem. Without them the disciples, in their despondency and depression, would not have found the strength for a joint endeavor. Once the Resurrection had appeared as a possibility in consequence of the report spread by the pious women, the followers of Christ experienced a strong desire to see Him. They would have been confused if He had shown Himself to the women, while urging them to content themselves with the promise of an apparition in Galilee.

At any rate, it would have been a rather sorry homecoming to Galilee, like that of a defeated army, while now His followers, comforted, encouraged, and confident, walk the paths He had so often trod with them, firmly expecting to see the Master after they arrived. Even though He did not designate a particular place for the reunion, they were by this time accustomed to His sudden, unexpected appearances, the uniqueness of

His glorified life, and had accepted as inevitable the fact that He was not to remain with them always and that they would enjoy His presence only occasionally. Now they put their trust in the Lord, confident that He would arrange all things well and bring them to the right consummation.

3. Undoubtedly they journeyed in separate groups. The principal group, led by Peter, is the one we meet again at the lake; the rest probably returned to their homes first, awaiting further directions there.

Let us always go wheresoever the Lord, through His representatives or by special impulse, bids us go, be it to a retreat, to a certain task, or a certain office!

II. AT LAKE TIBERIAS

(John xxi, 1 ff.)

I. The Night of Failure

a) *Peter's decision.* The small group we find on the shore of Lake Tiberias is composed of Peter, John, James, Nathanael (probably Bartholomew), Thomas, who has now attached himself to Peter with redoubled zeal, and two unnamed disciples. According to tradition, the scene was the neighborhood of the "Sweet Spring" near the present Tabiga. At the time of the pilgrimage of Burchard of Magdeburg (1283) the place was marked by a stone monument.

Simon Peter said to the others: "I go a-fishing."

The Master had probably given no directions as to the time and place of meeting. Hence, they had calmly

to await His pleasure, and the question what to do arose quite naturally. Peter, possibly moved by an impulse, answers it by deciding: "I go a-fishing." As a man of prompt decision and as the logical leader, he assumed leadership.

The Master would provide for the future, but the present was their own care. Hitherto the Master had cared for them, but now they must shift for themselves. Under the circumstances, the return to their accustomed occupation, which they had never entirely abandoned, seemed the simplest solution of the difficulty. The Apostle of the Gentiles also practised his accustomed trade occasionally (Acts xviii, 3). That was the logical thing to do; there was nothing wrong in it, and it took them out on the Lake with its many cherished memories of the Master and the life they had lived there in common with Him. It was here He had calmed the storm; here He had had Peter come to Him over the water; here they had experienced the miraculous draught of fishes, the repetition of which, soon to occur, was so well adapted to confirm the Lord's identity; here too the word concerning fishers of men had been spoken. This was the best way, then, to stay in spiritual communion with the Master. Possibly too the skiff they used was the same in which they had sat so frequently with Him.

b) "They say to him: we also come with thee." Everything is done at Peter's direction. Here he assumes direction as the recognized leader. The others follow Him without contradiction or hesitancy. Not one of them says: We shall not follow the man who denied

the Lord. The *"Surrexit et apparuit Petro"* has set everything aright. Thus united in mutual brotherly love and harmony they set to work.

When the Pope announces a decision, the response must be: We go with him, we agree with him; without hesitancy, contradiction or reservation.

c) *The night without success.* "And that night they caught nothing." All natural conditions for a successful catch exist. The smooth mirror of the lake reflects the pale light of the moon in its first quarter. They know the waters well, know the spots where fish should be found in plenty, they are experienced and skilled. Nothing is wanting for success—yet their efforts end in failure.

After the fatiguing work of a night, we find them with empty nets, tired bodies, disappointed, cold, wet, and dejected. Of course, they were accustomed to the vagaries of fisherman's luck, but this utter failure was a bitter disappointment.

This lack of success probably recalls the Master and His blessing to their mind. They miss Him now. No doubt they begin to speak of Him and long for Him ardently.

The Lord has intentionally permitted them to labor in vain. He desires to impress a lesson upon them, and He does it as He did formerly by applying the lesson to their work. They are to learn in a tangible way:

No success without Jesus;
Great success with Jesus!

The first lesson they have learned. Now it is the Master's turn to show what His aid and grace can achieve.

They were to become fishers of men. They could do so only with Him, commissioned by Him, strengthened by His grace. Evidently they were to be made to see:

Without Jesus nothing can be done;
With Him all is done well.

Only he who enters the pulpit, the confessional or the mission field under Christ's authority and in His name, has a claim to special aid from the Lord; only he will rescue men from the waters of ruin.

II. *The Dawn of Success and Presentiment*

a) *Jesus on the shore.* "But when the morning was come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples knew not that it was Jesus" (John xxi, 4).

Jesus is so near, yet the disciples do not know Him. Ah, how often that is our case also! Jesus is so near to us, and we give no thought to His nearness. He is ever present in the tabernacle, ever ready to aid us, yet we act as if we had no idea of His presence, and think He is far from us and we are forsaken in our distress. How little we realize His presence even during the Most Holy Sacrifice!

The Lord does not manifest Himself immediately, but gradually, and takes heed to emphasize the difference between past and present.

He does not approach the disciples walking on the waters; He is not in their midst in the ship; He announces Himself to them from the shore, from a distance. They are to learn from this symbol that even on the shores of eternity He does not forget His Church, that they may depend on His aid from Heaven. This scene illustrates the words: *"Ecce ego vobiscum sum . . ."* (Matt. xxviii, 20).

b) *The call.* "Jesus said to them: Children, have you any meat? They answered Him: No" (John xxi, 5).

The address is in the familiar form of a Galilean fisherman, whose appearance the Lord adopts in keeping with the circumstances. The question probably meant: "Have you made a good catch? Can I share in your good luck?" To this day fish, broiled on a fire of coals, with bread, is the ordinary food of fishermen in those parts. The Lord's simple, colloquial form of address, conforming altogether with His assumed character, is noticeable.

How cordially and affably the Lord descends to simple human manner, leaving aside everything formal, stilted and pietistic, differing therein utterly from so many reverend gentlemen who conduct themselves with ceremoniousness and unction when there is no call for it.

At first the Apostles think Him a stranger. Apparently they are not inclined to engage in conversation, hence the brief "No."

Probably the Lord's question was also intended to remind the Apostles of their failure in spite of all exer-

tions. They were to realize clearly their own insufficiency, so that they might later understand the better what it meant to have Jesus with them. "Without Me you can do nothing" (Jno. xv, 5).

c) The Lord addresses a summons to them. "He saith to them: Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and you shall find" (Jno. xxi, 6).

There is something strange in this exhortation. Like Naaman the Syrian, Peter and his companions might have asked, why they should have more luck by casting to the right. Surely they knew both the lake and their own trade! This was a test of their obedience, applied under trying conditions.

At the first miraculous draught, Peter knew it was Christ who commanded them to cast the net again, and therefore it was easy to obey. Now he does not know the summons comes from Christ. He does not know the man on shore.

What is it that impels him to do as the stranger suggests? Was it the confident tone of the summons, or a dim premonition, the memory of a similar invitation, addressed to him once before on the same body of water, possibly at the same place and in the same boat, when obedient compliance had produced so rare a blessing?

Whatever the motive, they comply with the summons, and their obedience is blessed.

Theirs is a glorious obedience! They obey the Lord without having recognized Him, with nothing more than a dim thought of Him. Thus is obedience for the sake of Christ constituted. One does not see Christ im-

mediately; one sees another person, hears a voice which seems that of a stranger.

Theirs is blind obedience. What the strange fisherman on shore urged them to do seemed odd enough. Why should they succeed now, at dawn, when they had failed during the much more favorable hours of the night? Why should the right side offer better prospects than the left?

Yet they obeyed in an uncertain presentiment that a Greater One stood behind the humble figure on the shore. And lo! a marvelous success was the reward of blind obedience!

d) *The miraculous draught of fishes.* "They cast therefore and now they were not able to draw it, for the multitude of fishes" (Jno. xxi, 6).

Thus the miracle, at which the Lord for the first time spoke of fishers of men, is repeated, feature by feature.

At first the Apostles forget everything but their joy over the great catch. The net is a quivering, sparkling mass, and they have difficulty in holding it. The delicious sunfish, the bighead, the large and small bream, and other varities of fish, in which the northern part of the lake abounds, had cast themselves helter-skelter into the net; 153 fishes were counted—a tremendous catch on a single cast; but, although the number was so great, the net did not tear, as John, himself an expert, adds to his account (xxi, 11). Which means that normally the net would have torn under the strain.

The Lord permits them to enjoy their good fortune; but He holds a far greater joy in reserve.

III. The Sunrise of Blissful Recognition

a) *John.* They still failed to recognize the Lord; but there was something in His tone of voice, His manner of speech, that captivated the Apostles and caused a premonition to rise in them, such as the two disciples had experienced at Emmaus. But after the miraculous draught, which surpassed everything they, experienced fishermen though they were, had ever seen, they began to feel their success was not due to chance, that the One who has the power of miracles has come to their aid. What all of them feel dimly becomes a certainty first of all in the mind of the disciple of love. "That disciple whom Jesus loved, said to Peter: It is the Lord!"

Dominus est! The loud, joyous cry creates an effect like a sudden flash of sunshine, darting across the surface of the lake at early dawn. In a moment everything is clear, the presentiment has become a joyous reality. The conviction *Dominus est* travels from mouth to mouth.

John is the first to recognize the Lord! The eye of love is keener than any other, the eye of the pure of heart clearer; and his heart, which had been so close to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, tells him by its stormy throbbing: *Dominus est!*

It is John, not Peter, who first recognizes the Lord. Thus it may be that others surpass the Pope in mental acumen and love and clearness of vision. The honorary degrees of dignity and love differ and are frequently awarded to different persons.

Dominus est! John's exclamation comes suddenly, unexpectedly, carrying a wealth of love. After the dark, cold night of fruitless toil the sun of grace rises and sheds its warm light into the soul.

Dominus est! What beautiful words! We should utter them whenever anything touches our soul deeply. If trials come, or disagreeable orders are received: *Dominus est!* My meditation was strained and without enlightenment, but at the end, during the colloquy, there flashed a sudden ray of light and grace: *Dominus est!* That happened during the Retreat, when I achieved something, came to understand something better, received joy and consolation: *Dominus est!* The Lord was evidently present, looking at me from the shore and helping me.

b) *Peter.* True to his character, prone to decisive action, Peter was wholly engrossed in storing the rich catch, which caused his fisherman's heart to leap for joy. But the instant John has spoken the words: "It is the Lord!" he drops everything. This utterance shocks him like an electric current, rouses the love of his tempestuously strong soul to pulsating life. A mighty urge seizes him.

"Simon Peter, when he heard that it was the Lord, girt his coat about him (for he was naked) and cast himself into the sea."

The ship was not far from the shore, a matter of a few oar-strokes. But Peter cannot wait another second . . . To Him! To Him!

Similarly we also, as soon as any happening has made

us realize that *Dominus est,* must hasten to Him in the tabernacle, to pour out our heart to Him, to thank Him, to make good resolutions.

One thought only holds Peter back for a moment—he was naked, that is, he had laid aside his tunic and wore only a loin-cloth or a short apron, such as fishermen in the Orient wear to insure freedom of motion when pulling in the nets. He feels he may not show himself to his Lord in this disarray. Therefore, he hurriedly dons the sleeveless tunic, reaching to the knees, which was and still is the customary garb of Galilean fishermen.

He does not act as do some priests who hurry to the Lord at the altar naked, that is, barely out of bed, without meditation, without decent preparation, without making a spiritual toilet, without heed and reverence.

Dressed in this fashion, Peter casts himself into the cold water in order to gain land by a few vigorous strokes, to be the first to greet the Lord and to pay Him homage.

This is Peter as we know him—he who previously had prayed to be allowed to walk on the water to meet the Lord. His love has merely received a new impulse of gratitude by reason of the great kindness and mercy shown him by the Master.

IV. Lessons

a) Peter's strong desire to come to the Master as quickly as possible is beautiful indeed! How wretchedly weak the desires we late-born disciples of the Lord

cherish! He stands in the tabernacle as though on shore, not yet clearly recognizable in the uncertain light of dawn. Faith, enlightened, declares: *Dominus est!* Now love should fly. Instead, many of us lazily stay in the comfortable ship, in a cozy arm-chair, unable to summon enough energy to pay Him a visit.

b) Ascetics and mystics of old saw, not improperly, in the two Apostles Peter and John and their differing conduct types of the active and the contemplative life. The love of the contemplative soul frequently has keener spiritual eyes, so that it recognizes the divine more quickly and accurately. John is more introspective, tender, delicate.

The love of the active soul, however, is more vigorous. It converts recognition, obtained by communication, into prompt action.

One may also think of the two forms of prayer, intellectual and affective.

"Proprios sibi mores exhibent discipuli Petrus et Ioannes. Ille ferventior, hic sublimior erat; ille promptior, hic perspicacior; ideo Ioannes prior Jesum agnovit, Petrus prior illum adiit" (Chrys.).

The two types supplement each other.

c) Even now the Lord has His Peter and John in every community. All are near to Him, but each in his own way. Many kneel in chapel before the tabernacle, but not all are equally close to the Lord.

d) Two paths lead to Jesus: The majority of the disciples come to Him rowing the skiff; Peter swims.

The first is the usual, the normal way for the major-

ity. Let it suffice for you unless a special voice calls you to the other, extraordinary one.

The second way is unusual, neither to be criticized nor to be entered upon without due deliberation. Guidance of grace must determine whether anyone is to tread this path.

The first or common way leads to the goal more slowly, but it is less dangerous. The other is not without hazard, particularly for anyone who cannot swim or swims but poorly.

III. THE BREAKFAST ON SHORE

I. The Master Has Prepared a Meal

a) A new surprise awaits the disciples on shore. "As soon then as they came to land, they saw hot coals lying, and a fish laid thereon, and bread" (Jno. xxi, 9).

Breakfast, prepared by the hand of the Master Himself! What could have been more welcome to the tired, hungry disciples on that damp, cold morning!

b) The Lord thinks of everything; He combines the corporal with the spiritual and intertwines them graciously, as in the case of the sacraments. What a kind Superior! One need but think of the parable of the servants whom the Lord finds prepared, and whom He Himself serves.

c) This agape by the blue lake, fresh with the briskness of morning, is unquestionably one of the most

appealing scenes depicted in the Gospel. Virtually on no other occasion did the Lord show such condescension and familiar affability.

II. They Land Their Catch

"Jesus saith to them: Bring hither of the fishes which you have now caught" (Jno. xxi, 10).

a) He wished them to see and appreciate the size, number and quality of the fishes, so that they might realize that the Lord, though at a distance, had aided them.

They were thus given the assurance that He does not leave them alone; that in future, though unseen, He will assist them from the shores of eternity, in fishing for men, of which calling they must needs be reminded by the similarity of this miracle with the former miraculous draught. He will not withhold His aid from them; they need not despair and ask: How can we do what He wishes us to do? They are not to lose courage if their efforts are unsuccessful at times. Ultimately the Lord will bless them. They may depend on Him, if they will but heed His directions and act in accordance with them.

b) "Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land, full of great fishes, one hundred and fifty-three." The net is dragged by the others, but Peter draws it to the land. His action is determinative and, as it were, unites in one hand the labors of the other Apostles. Thus the success of the apostolate of the Church is ascribed to the popes. What the Apostles achieve by joint effort,

as comrades and equals, Peter achieves by virtue of his particular office. We see all the spiritual powers which Jesus entrusted to the Apostles for the salvation of souls concentrated in Peter's hands.

c) They count their catch and find there are 153 large fishes. Thus we priests shall one day know precisely how many fishes we brought to land, how many souls we saved.

III. The Lord Invites Them to a Repast

"Jesus saith to them: Come and dine" (Jno. xxi, 12).

a) Evidently the Lord loves to combine his important manifestations with a family repast; thus in Emmaus and in the hall at Jerusalem. It pleases Him to act as father of a family and to feed His household with His own hands.

"*Accipiunt de sacratissimis manibus eius escas desiderabiles et reficiuntur non minus spirituliter quam corporaliter. O quale est illud convivium!*" (Ludolphus).

b) There is a deep significance in the fact that the catch itself becomes food, source of enjoyment, reward. It is the happy fate of an Apostle that the souls saved by the power and authority of Christ are his abundant meat and refreshment. How St. Francis Xavier on the Moro Islands rejoiced! What joy permeates the letters of missionaries even today! There is a sweet reward for the zealous apostle both here below and in eternity.

IV. The Impression Made upon the Disciples

"And none of them who were at meat durst ask Him: Who art Thou? knowing that it was the Lord" (Jno. xxi, 12).

Thus John fittingly records the unique effect of the manifestation. The words are characteristic of his quaintly frank style. At the Master's invitation they seat themselves about the fire and take their portions of the food in silence. No one has a word to say. The entire episode was so singular, the Master's love and condescension so overwhelming, that they can scarce grasp it. It is the Master—that is certain. Even Thomas does not doubt it. They are as happy as children because He is with them again. The unexpectedness of His coming; His person, commanding reverence and radiating a sense of the supernatural, the divine; His moving kindness—all of these things shatter their composure. Their experience was similar to that of plain folk who are unexpectedly treated in a friendly manner by a distinguished person of superior station. They are happy indeed, but theirs is a shy, restrained, embarrassed happiness.

Thus the disciples gaze upon the Master with happy, joyful eyes, but also with reverential admiration. They feel that He no longer belongs so wholly to them as before His Passion. He is already in part separated from them—He is on the way to the Father. In this wise they are slowly prepared for their spiritual relation to Him after His ascension into Heaven.

The disciples' restraint is dispelled only little by

little under the influence of His kindness, particularly since, very probably, as at Emmaus and in the cenacle, He partakes of the meal and assumes the rôle of head of the household, who dispenses the portions. Their diffidence vanishes utterly under His mild gaze and a confident, joyous mood prevails. The cordial character of the agape was well adapted to dispel timidity.

This repast becomes the link connecting the miraculous draught of fishes and the institution of the Primacy.

V. Breakfast and Eucharist

a) How plain and simple this agape on the shore! Nevertheless some of the Fathers and earlier exegetes do not hesitate to assume that a Eucharistic significance attaches to it. "*Piscis assus Christus est passus*" (Aug., *Tract. in Io.*, 123, 2). According to Kraus (*Realenzykl.*, I, 437) the early Christian symbolic use of the fish is to be traced to this scene.

That is entirely in keeping with the concept of the Eucharist prevailing in the primitive Church. Is it not, on the other hand, possible, that a too highly spiritualized, mystical conception of this Sacred Mystery hampers its beneficial use? One imagines one must always expect something exceptionally great and extraordinary. Yet the essential thing is: "*Dominus est!*" He comes truly and really, but plainly and simply. He comes to make us happy. "Come, and dine!"

b) But, even assuming that there is merely a ques-

tion of ordinary food, this scene nevertheless offers many points of contact with the Eucharist.

It is the beautiful pattern of the Eucharistic repast at dawn which the Lord prepares for His apostolic workers of the future, to strengthen them for their daily toil. And as the morning meal on shore awaited the disciples after the exertions of a night of fishing, so we, after the hardships and exertions of the apostolate, shall find the eternal wedding-banquet awaiting us in Heaven.

As in this scene, so also in the tabernacle, the Lord is mysteriously, uniquely transfigured. Yet no one asks: "Who art Thou?" Everyone knows it is He.

The disciples eat, the while they look upon the Lord with love and reverence. Thus we should eat the bread and the holy ἰχθύς of the Eucharist in whole-hearted faith and love. And if the manner of His presence seems strange and mysterious to us, we should not question: "Is it truly Thou?" For we know it is He, just as the Apostles knew it.

IV. INSTITUTION OF THE PRIMACY

I. Significance of the Scene

a) The entire manifestation at the Lake takes place for Peter's sake, and leads to the institution of the Primacy. We must be grateful to St. John for once more supplementing the synoptics in so happy a fashion.

The purpose is evidently twofold: Peter is to be publicly rehabilitated and the Primacy, the office of supreme shepherd, is to be instituted.

b) The first purpose is achieved by the question, asked three times: "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?" While delicately remindful of the twice repeated denial, it contains a solemn assurance of fullest pardon: Peter, be not oppressed by thy fall. All is forgiven, the old relation is reëstablished: "I know thou lovest Me, more than before." The key sentence of the parable related by the Lord to Simon the Pharisee (Luke vii, 42) applies here: "Which therefore, loveth him most? . . . He, to whom he forgave most." This scene removes even the most trifling shadow still possibly clinging to Peter.

c) But the significance of the scene is by no means exhausted. The hour is approaching in which Jesus, the chief "Shepherd and Bishop of our souls" (1 Pet. ii, 25), is to depart from hence and the office of His representative on earth is to begin. The Lord had previously, in the significant scene at Cæsarea Philippi, of which this episode is evidently a parallel, indicated that Peter is to be this representative (Matt. xvi, 16 ff.). Simon there became Peter, the man of the Rock. But the man of the Rock had not stood the test, had once more become the old Simon. Had the Master revoked the promise made on that occasion? This question naturally must force itself upon Peter and his fellow-Apostles. Peter had indeed, after the Master appeared to him, *de facto* again assumed leadership;

but did he do so also *de jure?* On this matter the Master had not yet declared Himself.

He does it now, in a marvelously tender, loving, and effective manner. The priority which Peter had then won by his faith in the Son of God, he was now to win back by greater love, proper to His representative. If faith had made him the Rock of the Church, love now appoints him shepherd.

How beautifully and wisely the Lord attaches all particularly important teachings and institutions to such striking scenes, which necessarily must impress themselves indelibly and serve as future guides!

II. The Question Concerning Love

a) Before Peter was appointed chief shepherd, he was obliged to pass an examination. Very properly examination precedes introduction into office. *"Commendavit oves suas S. Petro examinato primum tribus vicibus de caritate"* (*Lib. Exerc., Myst. Vitae D. N.*). Before the Lord elevates Peter, He makes him humble.

The examination, however, is not concerned with knowledge, science, education, diplomatic skill and the like, but solely with love of Christ. This is therefore the first and most necessary quality which alone qualifies any one for leadership and government in His Church.

Thus precisely does the Lord show His love for His own that He entrusts them only to such as love Him, aye, love Him more than the others do.

The question conforms with Peter's attitude of soul. Again he is full of love as he had been at the Last Supper, when he had given such impetuous expression to his emotion. But on that occasion his love, not yet transfigured, had led him astray, into bold exaggeration of his own strength. *Etsi omnes—ego nunquam,* which also means: I love Thee more than all the rest.

And after this declaration he went forth to deny His Master. . . . "I know him not!"

The question concerning love is, therefore, justified.

b) *"When they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter: Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these?"* (Jno. xxi, 15).

1. It is significant that the Lord does not now address him by his honorable title: Peter. The name "Man of the Rock" had to be reconfirmed.

The form of address contains an element of solemnity. The use of the full name, "Simon, son of John," indicates the importance of that which is to come and implies that, what the Master intends to say and do, applies to Peter exclusively. Hence also the words "more than these," which virtually lift Peter out of the group of his companions.

2. If Jesus had addressed this question to Peter at the Last Supper, he would have answered without the slightest hesitation, with a confident, ready yes!

His fall has made him humble. He no longer boasts of his strength and superiority, the insignificance of which was impressed upon him in so painful a manner. He has become another man, ripened, more sedate.

But neither does he say "no!" He does not answer to the "more than these;" knowing he can offer no personal guarantee, he appeals to the Master's knowledge of human hearts. The Lord is omniscient, therefore, He knows the answer to this question.

He answers simply and trustingly: "Yes, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee!"

Would that every priest could truthfully give the same answer to this question!

3. What was, in fact, the status of Peter's love? He could have assured the Lord truthfully that he now loved Him more than before, more deeply, more sincerely. In a sense it was true that Peter loved Him more than the others. He and John were particularly close to the heart of the Master and there was no doubt of their strong attachment to Him. There was indeed a difference between the devotion of the two. As Grotius aptly phrases it, Peter was rather φιλοχρίστος, John rather φιλοιησοῦς, *i. e.,* while Peter's love was directed more towards the office and position of Christ and therefore was more energetic, as he had frequently shown at critical moments and recently also at the *"Dominus est,"* John's love was centered more upon the person of Jesus and consequently was more tender, cordial, and quiet. The Lord evidenced special attachment to both of them—to Peter rather as Christ, and to John rather as Jesus.

Yes, Peter loves the Master and is filled with a desire to show this love in deed. How he might best do this, the Lord shows him by the commission: "Feed My lambs!" He makes him the shepherd of those

whom He loves in a particular manner (cfr. Matt. xviii, 14).

III. The Threefold Question—Peter's Sadness

"Peter was grieved when He had said to him the third time: Lovest thou Me? And he said to Him: Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee" (Jno. xxi, 17).

a) Peter is grieved by the repetition of the question, addressed to him thrice. That is readily understood. It sounded so much like a questioning of his love, and the recollection of his having thrice denied Christ must have been aroused spontaneously. Peter realizes that the Lord knows the future. He had foretold the denial so clearly. Was it possible that the Lord again foresaw something similar? Impossible as this seems to Peter, he dared not contradict Him. He merely says: "Thou knowest all things, the present and the future; Thou knowest, that I have sinned, but Thou also knowest that I have been sorry for my sin, have wept over it, have suffered because of it, have atoned for it. I know only the present, and for it I can only say: Thou knowest that I love Thee."

Oh, how touching the simple humility and sincerity of Peter's declaration! How it honors Peter! The repetition does not rouse his impatience and irritate him, it merely saddens him. His reply reveals no touch of offended sensitiveness; it is but an humble submission, full of diffidence. Lord, Thou knowest!

b) Peter has passed his examination well. The Lord has given him an opportunity to make amends for his threefold denial, to set a thrice-told *"Amo te,"* a triple assurance of purified love against the thrice-uttered "I know him not!" *"Redditur negationi trinae trina confessio, ne minus amori lingua serviat quam timori et plus vocis elicuisse videatur mors imminens quam vita praesens"* (Aug., *Tract. in Io.*, 123).

Thus the covenant of love is sealed anew. The Lord shows Peter how he may make full amends by Apostolic zeal: *Pasce*. . . . Undoubtedly the Master's eye and gesture told him still more, and Peter rises from his knees, happy and relieved.

Unquestionably the entire episode had been observed by the disciples with increasing attention.

c) Some writers will not concede the propriety of interpreting the repeated question as a reminder of the repeated denial and contend that the repetition served merely to add solemnity and impressiveness to the act of conferring supreme authority on Peter. Undoubtedly the latter consideration was in the Saviour's mind also; but why should the question have been put exactly three times?

The Master's art of teaching is most beautifully shown in this fine, delicate manner of reprimanding and assuring atonement for guilt. And precisely this fact renders this scene the clearest and most unmistakable rehabilitation of Peter before the assembled college of the Apostles. Amends for public scandal are made by public atonement. Thus it must be and thus

it has continued to be in the Church. And the more exalted the office, the more imperative the duty of atonement. It never dishonors anyone.

IV. Lessons

The episode is replete with instructive suggestions.

a) The Church may learn from it to what conditions and demands she must subject her popes, bishops, and all those whom she raises to office and honor. Naturally talents, knowledge, prudence, energy, skill, etc., are qualities recommending a candidate. But the first and most important condition is true love of Christ. And rightly so! For how could anyone be a good shepherd after the example set by Christ if he lacked true love of Christ? Only he who truly loves Christ can love His sheep with a true pastoral love. Woe to the sheep whose shepherd lacks love, that fundamental requisite of beneficent activity.

And the higher the office, the greater the love should be! A primacy of love must correspond to the primacy of rights!

b) The scene offers a consoling demonstration that former mistakes and sins are not an impediment, if they are atoned for in humble penance and amends made by intensified love. This appears beautifully in the instances of Peter, and after him, of Paul, Ignatius, Francis Xavier, and many others!

c) A pattern is set up here for ecclesiastical superiors, showing them how to reprove, punish and demand

atonement. How gently and considerately the Lord does this! Thus He achieves infinitely more than do others with stern measures.

And how light the penance imposed by the Divine Father Confessor for a very serious offense, knowing as He does the contrite spirit and sincere love of the penitent!

d) The scene also offers marvelously consoling and stimulating parallels for the life of the priest.

It is repeated time and again, feature by feature, at every clerical retreat. A priest has fallen, denied the Master in a darksome hour; but he bitterly bewails his fault, and returns to the Master contrite, humbled, but also confident. And Jesus inclines towards him in a kindly manner, and addresses to him also the question: Lovest thou Me?

What is he to answer, conscious as he is that his former love, so loudly professed and sworn, has failed? And yet he feels, for his heart tells him, that he loves the Master more than before: "O Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee!"

An increased, refined love for Christ is the most precious result of a good retreat—a gain that nothing can replace. It almost automatically produces the holy resolve to be a good shepherd and to make amends for everything by faithful pastoral love.

Therefore, retreats for the clergy must not, as they frequently are, be confined to the eternal truths, to Mt. Sinai, as it were. They must have for their chief aim a renewal and deepening of the love of Christ.

V. One Shepherd and One Flock

The dogmatic significance of this scene is clear. It completes what had been begun in essentials at Cæsarea Philippi: the institution of the primacy.

a) Protestant exegetists, as is well known, explain the words spoken to Peter in Matt. xvi, 19, as addressed to all the faithful. That should naturally apply to this scene also. Yet such an assumption would evidently be unreasonable. If all are to be shepherds, where are the sheep?

A sharp distinction is here drawn between shepherd and flock. And Peter is clearly chosen to exercise the office of chief shepherd over the entire flock; to him alone the entire flock is entrusted, and if the other shepherds have power, it emanates from him, can be exercised only under his supreme direction, never against him.

b) The Apostles could understand it in no other sense. Once the Lord had asked Peter: "Lovest thou Me?" the others might have expected He would address the same question to them also. But no! He asks it only of Peter. The others must receive the impression that Peter was being accorded a position of priority. They had indeed been witnesses of the Lord's manifestation and had had a part in the miraculous draught of fishes, but only because they had followed Peter's summons and had assisted him.

c) As a matter of fact they did so understand it at that time and later. This is evidenced by the position held by Peter in the council of the Apostles. He is the

unquestioned leader, the head of the young Church, and even Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, vastly superior to Peter in knowledge, education, and acquaintance with the ways of the world, who knows he has been immediately called by the Lord, recognizes the necessity of establishing contact with Peter before undertaking his great mission among the gentiles (Gal. i, 18), precisely because he sees in him the appointed head of the Apostles and the chief shepherd of Christ's flock.

d) The necessity, however, and the beneficial effects of the institution of a chief shepherd and leader of the Church is shown by a glance at the religious disagreement and division existing outside of the Catholic Church. What has become, in the midst of this disunion, of the prophecy concerning *one* shepherd and *one* flock?

VI. Pastoral Care

a) *Si amas—pasce!* How significant this union of condition and function, thrice repeated! The Good Shepherd, the *princeps pastorum* (1 Pet. v, 4), loves his sheep indeed; He has told us of His love in so stirring a manner (Jno. x, 11 f.); they are His heart's great care; and their welfare is served even by this last commission assigned to His representative, to whom, in parting, He entrusts His flock. Although this commission applies in a particular sense to Peter, the urgent admonition: *Si amas—pasce!* is addressed to all shepherds of the Church, to every priest charged with the care of souls. And Peter himself does not

hesitate to communicate this admonition to his co-workers in his first Pontifical Letter: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking care of it, not by constraint, but willingly, according to God; not for filthy lucre's sake, but voluntarily: neither as lording it over the clergy, but being made a pattern of the flock from the heart. And when the Prince of pastors shall appear, you shall receive a never fading crown of glory" (1 Pet. v, 2–4).

If then, you desire to be a priest after the heart of Christ, the faithful shepherding of the souls entrusted to you must be your first and last care. In no other manner can you win the love and favor of the Good Shepherd. He will accept nothing else as full proof of your love for Him. *Si amas—pasce!*

The priest engaged in the cure of souls, therefore, who pursues his hobbies and carries on the feeding of his flock as a secondary occupation, is not a shepherd after the heart of God; he lacks what is most essential —love for Christ.

b) This applies primarily to the cure of souls as such, but in general also to every function of the priestly office. *"Pasce illas doctrina, sacramentis et exemplis bonae vitae, adjuvans eas omnibus operibus misericordiae spiritualibus et corporalibus!"* (Lud. de Ponte). If you are a teacher, the Lord says to you: *pasce!* Teach, train, exert yourself in the classroom and lecture-hall; offer your pupils wholesome, strengthening food for mind and soul! *Si amas—pasce!* If you are a writer, the Master admonishes: *pasce!* Write, edit, publish, good books, which will provide thousands with

solid intellectual nourishment! *Si amas—pasce!* If you are the director of a large institution: *pasce!* Be a good, watchful provident manager! *Si amas—pasce!* If you are father confessor, spiritual director of a seminary, a religious community, a convent: *pasce!* Ever so much depends upon your zeal, your prudence, your example, your prayer, for the spiritual growth and advancement of your flock. *Si amas—pasce!*

c) The Lord does not say: *Pasce oves tuas,* but *oves meas! "Si me diligis, non te pascere cogita, sed oves meas pasce, sicut meas pasce, non sicut tuas; gloriam meam in eis quaere, non tuam; damnum meum, non tuum; lucra mea, non tua"* (Aug., *Tract. ult. in Io.*).

Even the pope, albeit his old official title is *Dominus Noster,* is not the lord and master of the flock entrusted to him, but the representative and servant of the Chief Shepherd. This consideration applies still more forcibly to the bishops, pastors, etc. Their concern must be the souls, but the souls are Christ's. Ah, what harm has been done in the Church of God by failure to remember this truth, by hard, selfish, repellent, domineering, avaricious conduct!

d) According to the original Greek text the expression for flock is changed each time in the repeated commission: *ἀγνία, προβάτια, πρόβατα*—lambs, young sheep, ewes. Exegetes interpret these terms as signifying catechumens, the baptized, and the ancients. However it would seem that in the mind of the Saviour the children hold first place; to them His love is particularly directed and He espouses their care with special warmth on another occasion (Matt. xviii, 6 ff.). This would

imply that the Master's favorites are most particularly recommended to Peter's charge, to that of the Church and her shepherds—a thought which must appeal forcibly to the heart of the priest! He cannot show his love for Jesus, the Divine Friend of children, better than by extending a loving solicitude to children.—Early Communion! *Si amas—pasce!*

V. PETER'S FATE

I. The Prophecy of His Death

"Amen, amen I say to thee, when thou wast younger, thou didst gird thyself, and didst walk where thou wouldst. But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and lead thee whither thou wouldst not. And this He said, signifying by what death he should glorify God" (Jno. xxi, 18–19).

a) From the shore of Lake Tiberias the Master casts His gaze upon the City of the Seven Hills, where Peter is to die on the cross, and predicts this fate to him. As on numerous other occasions, He employs the solemn, mysterious language of prophecy and clothes the prediction in a simile.

The picture of girding will be readily understood if one thinks of the long, wide garb worn in the Orient, which was drawn together and raised by a girdle, to insure freedom of motion at work or while walking. The act of stretching out the arms to permit oneself to be girded by another, is a picture of helplessness or

of being dependent on another's assistance, of being in another's power.

The meaning is evident. Until now, He wishes to say to Peter, you have been your own leader; you did whatever you pleased, and, confiding in your strength, followed your own impetuous will. Now the time is come when, realizing your weakness, you surrender your will to a higher power, which will finally lead you where the natural man in you does not wish to go—to death on the cross. Peter understood all of this perfectly, as we see from his letters: "Being assured that the laying away of this my tabernacle is at hand, according as our Lord Jesus Christ also hath signified to me" (2 Pet. i, 14; cfr. 1 Pet. v, 4).

The prediction also clearly designates the manner of Peter's death. The expression "stretch forth the hands" is used with reference to crucifixion by secular writers like Plautus (cfr. Justin M., *Dial. c. Tryph.*, c. 97). This method of execution is simply designated as τῶν χειρῶν ἔκτασις. *"Tunc Petrus ab altero cingitur, cum cruci adstringitur"* (Tert., *Scorp.*, 15).

b) The Lord could not have told Peter anything more welcome than that he would die for Christ, and in death would be like unto his crucified Lord and Master. His impetuous desire then, to share prison and death with the Master (Jno. xvi, 13, 36 ff.; Luke xxvii, 33), is to be ultimately gratified, yet not by virtue of his own strength, but by virtue of the divine power which will sustain and guide him. What the Lord names as the most beautiful mark of the good shepherd, that he layeth down his life for his sheep (Jno. x, 11), is

thus to be fulfilled in Peter. He is to be the first martyr-pope. And many others shall follow him as in dignity so also in martyrdom suffered for the sake of Christ. It is significant that the Saviour joined the prophecy of Peter's crucifixion to the conferring of his exalted dignity.

c) Together with the dignity and the prophecy Peter is given the assurance that this time he will persevere even unto death, whereby he will offer the most beautiful proof of his love.

d) "When thou wast younger thou didst gird thyself and didst walk where thou wouldst. But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands. . . ." Do not these words, in a modified sense, apply to you also, O priest of God? When you were young, everything seemed easily attainable; you stormed into life with an impatient, youthful sense of strength, and imagined you would be able to realize all your ideals. But the years with their experiences, disappointments, and process of ripening have made a different man of you. Now you willingly permit another to gird you, you willingly yield yourself into His hands: Lord, do with me as it pleaseth Thee!

Young men imagine that they may do as they please when they grow old. But God disposes otherwise: "Another will gird thee!"

e) There are two kinds of sufferings, penances and crosses. One kind is self-imposed. One girds oneself, mortifies oneself, disciplines oneself, entirely according to personal choice. Self-love is only too apt to assert itself, to be exaggerated in such matters. The suffer-

ings sent by God, illness, invalidism, failure, are a different matter. God Himself girds you and leads you where you do not wish to go, lays crosses on your shoulders which are unexpected and unwelcome and in which your self-will has no part. The matured priest extends his hands to accept what God sends and as He sends it.

II. The Summons to Follow Christ

"Sequere me!" (Jno. xxi, 19).

a) Jesus prepares for His departure. This time He does not disappear suddenly, as He had done on other occasions, but walks along the shore of the lake and invites Peter to follow Him.

Word and scene vividly recall an incident at the Last Supper. "Simon Peter saith to Him: Lord, whither goest Thou? Jesus answered: Whither I go thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow hereafter. Peter saith to Him: Why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thee. Jesus answered him: Wilt thou lay down thy life for Me? Amen, amen I say to thee, the cock shall not crow till thou deny me thrice" (Jno. xiii, 36, 38; Luke xxii, 33).

Now this moment, this "later," has arrived, and the mouth of the Master speaks the admonition: *Sequere me!*

At that time it was a self-willed, sadly deficient following: *"Petrus autem sequebatur eum a longe"* (Matt. xxvi, 58). This time he will follow the Master faithfully to the end.

b) This invitation of the Lord to Peter, and to Peter alone, certainly implies a special distinction and exemplifies his position of priority. He walks alone with Jesus, is closer to Him than John, "whom He loved." Everything serves to emphasize the Primacy.

c) Probably the Lord told Peter many things concerning his office as shepherd and his own future. It is very significant that in conclusion he once again calls on Peter to follow Him: *"Tu me sequere!"*

How are *you* following Christ?

VI. THE FATE OF JOHN

I. Peter's Question

a) While Peter obeyed the Lord's invitation, it seems, John, uninvited, followed both at a distance. Peter, who had noticed John, then voices the question: "Peter, turning about, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also leaned on His breast at supper, and said: Lord, who is he that shall betray Thee? Him therefore when Peter had seen, he saith to Jesus: Lord, and what shall this man do?" (Jno. xxi, 20–21).

b) In view of the cordial friendship between Peter and John, which had become more intimate since the Passion, this question was quite natural. If Peter reflected on his own faithlessness and John's fidelity, remembering also the great love Jesus cherished for John, it must have appeared strange to him that in spite of everything the Master honored him so signally

and showered him with graces, while John was apparently being disregarded.

c) This association of ideas explains Peter's timid question fully. It is not prompted by curiosity, but by true friendship. Possibly Peter would have been happy to have his beloved fellow-Apostle as a companion and partner in office, and to see him honored by some sort of distinction.

Peter displays a fine trait, not always noticeable among the clergy when a fellow-Apostle moves up higher.

II. The Master's Reply

"Jesus saith to him: So I will have him to remain till I come, what is it to thee? Follow thou Me!" (Jno. xxi, 22). According to the Greek original, the Lord says: "If I will . . . ," which gives the same sense to the context.

a) The Lord's reply is repellent, though not unfriendly. There had been a hint in Peter's question, as if the Master had forgotten or overlooked something. Therefore, the brief dismissal and explanation.

b) As a matter of fact, the Lord had already disposed of John on the cross. He is to be the guardian of Mary. That is his particular office, and truly a high honor and a great happiness. For the rest, he is to remain as he is. No official dignity is in store for him. Nor for the other Apostles. The future will reveal what is to become of them. That is a *cura posterior.*

The determination, however, of a head and chief shepherd was necessary and could emanate from none but the Lord Himself. It is the great affair which must be kept distinct and separate from every other. Peter, once established in office and dignity, is to determine what shall become of the others. *"Et tu conversus, confirma fratres tuos!"*

c) Here again we note that the grades of honor and of love are different. How often does it not happen that someone is appointed to high honors, while others, who apparently are more deserving, are not promoted. God knows what is best. *Quid ad te?* Let God dispose of you and be content with the position He has assigned to you.

Assuredly the repellent *"quid ad te?"* contains an admonition to those of the clergy whose favorite topic of conversation is promotions. When will Father A. become superior, pastor, or monsignor? And Father B. a bishop?

d) This passage is frequently also interpreted as a prophecy by the Lord of John's natural death in contrast with Peter's death by violence.

In the primitive Church the mysterious words, "So I will have him remain," give rise to the belief that John would never die.

The wish to dispel this rumor was one of the considerations that induced John to add the last section to his Gospel. We have here an interesting illustration of how, in the early Church, side by side with the Gospel, a free and probably very copious popular tradition was current, which, along with much that was

valuable, contained also a quantity of chaff and fabulous gossip. At the same time it is an illustration of how the official Church declared against such unauthorized traditions and misunderstandings, and how careful she was to eliminate erroneous conceptions from revelation.

"This saying therefore went abroad among the brethren that that disciple should not die. And Jesus did not say to him: He should not die, but: So I will have him to remain till I come, what is it to thee?" (Jno. xxi, 23).

VII. CHRIST'S REVIEW OF HIS FORCES ON THE MOUNTAIN

"And the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them" (Matt. xxviii, 16; cfr. Mark xvi, 7).

"Then He was seen by more than five hundred brethren at once, of whom many remain until this present, and some are fallen asleep" (1 Cor. xv, 6).

I. The Circumstances of the Manifestation

a) *The Scene.* The Lord had instructed the disciples to go to a mountain. All great revelations emanate from the mountains. In the mountains the great rivers, which carry blessings and fruitfulness into the lands, have their sources.

Ancient tradition points to Thabor, the mount of the Transfiguration, which, boldly piercing the sky-line, dominates the plain of Esdrelon and offers a beautiful

view of the lake, somewhat like the Rigi in Switzerland.

This place, hallowed by memories of the Transfiguration, was centrally located. Such a mass meeting could not take place on the shores of the lake, usually the scene of life and activity. Possibly the Lord had designated this point as the meeting-place during His appearance at Lake Tiberias.

b) *The Participants.* Specific mention is made of the Eleven, to whom the world-mission was to be primarily committed. Since they had already seen the Lord and simultaneously shared in so many graces and such abundant consolation, they went there in joyous anticipation. Inasfar as they had not previously done so, Peter and James and John had probably related to the others the mystery of the Transfiguration, of which they had been the chosen witnesses and regarding which they had to observe silence until after the Resurrection (Matt. xvii, 9).

How different now their understanding of everything! Now they perceive clearly that Jesus is truly the *Filius dilectus*, that He is the Messias, the end and the supreme Head of the law and the prophets (Moses and Elias), and that He must die to redeem the world.

Besides the Eleven came the disciples; it appears that there was a goodly number of disciples present.

c) This appearance of the Lord has a particular significance, in that it was the first recorded before a general gathering. We note the gradual procedure observed by Him. At first He manifests Himself to individuals, then to groups, and finally to a large as-

semblage. For this is evidently the appearance before the five hundred of which St. Paul speaks. A number of disciples had probably scattered after the Passion and separated from the community, discouraged. The majority had doubtless learned of the Resurrection only by rumor. Now a general convention is to bring them all together and to strengthen them. The doubters —and there were such among them—were to be convinced by ocular evidence. Moreover, the disciples were to share in the world-mission, as they had shared in the mission to the sheep of Israel (Luke x, 1 ff.).

The ecumenical councils have a similar purpose; after periods of stress and storm they are to bring greater unity, courage, and strength to the Church.

II. The Manifestation

a) "And seeing Him, they adored" (Matt. xxviii, 17).

Here again the Lord seems to have appeared suddenly, somewhat as He did in the cenacle. We may also assume that something similar to the Transfiguration on Thabor was repeated, and that Jesus permitted some of the light of His Divinity to radiate from Him, in order to lend emphasis to His declaration: "All power is given to Me." The report, with its reference to the adoration by the multitude, seems to indicate something of the sort. Unwittingly the disciples fall upon their knees, as Thomas had done.

b) "But some doubted."

This is probably to be understood as applying to the

disciples from Galilee, who had not seen the Lord since the Passion. We have here a repetition of the happenings in the cenacle. Everything was indeed so unique, so exceptional, that it seemed a dream.

c) But as, on that other occasion, the Eleven and the other disciples in Jerusalem, so now these doubters are won quickly by His kindness and love. "And Jesus coming, spoke to them." Thus they could convince themselves of the reality and may well have cried out: *Dominus est!* The last trace of doubt is dispelled and in them, too, the word is fulfilled: *Gavisi sunt viso Domino!*

A similar frame of mind frequently obtained at ecumenical councils, *e. g.*, at Constance and Trent. There, too, quite a few were dispirited, reticent, skeptical. Tendencies were evident and parties grouped together. But then the Spirit of God came over the assemblage—Christ, as it were, appeared among them, and all were filled with ardor and confidence.

d) Not only locally, but also in respect to the succession of events, there is a marked resemblance between the Transfiguration and this manifestation of Christ on the mountain. The three disciples fall prostrate there; here the disciples fall down in adoration. They were filled with fear, just as here also some doubt, and are startled and frightened. Jesus approached closely and spoke to the disciples on both occasions.

VIII. CHRIST SENDS HIS APOSTLES OUT INTO THE WORLD

The concluding verses of the three synoptic Gospels present, in their laconic brevity, divergencies difficult

to harmonize. Matthew clearly and positively records the mission mandate as having been issued from the mount. According to Mark and Luke, it might have been proclaimed at the last parting meal, or at the Ascension. Possibly these highly significant words were repeated several times—once on the mount in Galilee (Matt. xxviii, 48 ff.), and again in Jerusalem (Mark xvi, ix ff., Luke xxiv, 46 ff., Acts i, 8).

I. The Mission Mandate

a) It is Divine in Origin

1. *Who is it that sends the Apostles and disciples?* It is the supreme King, the Commander-in-chief. Most assuredly Christ appeared at this moment in exterior royal grandeur and dignity, glorified, His eyes radiant, as the Saviour of the world.

Never did general or conqueror—Alexander, Cæsar, or Napoleon—however successful, speak thus. The height of their ambition was the conquest of a few countries or territories. But *one* world-conqueror issues the bold order: Go into the whole world, to all nations!

Never in the entire history of the world was a commission given, so grand in purpose, scope, and consequences. But it is the Eternal Son of the Father, His equal in power and glory, who ordains it. He has the right to say: "All power is given to Me in Heaven and in earth" (Matt. xxviii, 18).

A word replete with divine majesty and an absolute consciousness of power. In the mouth of a mere man

such a declaration would be madness. But naturally it comes from His lips. "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporeally" (Col. ii, 9).

2. This divine mission mandate obligates the Church of Christ most solemnly throughout the world. Preaching the Gospel is her most sacred duty, and she may not rest until the last willing soul is saved, the last lamb is brought into the fold of Christ, even though she must continue her labors to the end of time. Woe to the Church if she failed to comply with this obligation! (Cfr. the first part of the Encyclical Letter of Pius XI on the Missions).

Thus the juridical basis of the Church's mission is the will of Christ, to which every earthly power must bow. Therefore, the Church demands full freedom in the pursuit of her vocation, and has a perfect right to demand the coöperation of the State.

3. From this mission mandate issued by Christ the Church derives the right and the duty to enlist all the faithful without exception, but primarily her priests, for active coöperation in the great work by prayer, alms, and other forms of assistance. And those priests who, instead of promoting the work of the missions, hamper it by their narrow attitude, disobey the command of their Lord and King, who expressly stated: "And other sheep I have, that are not of this fold; them also must I bring" (Jno. x, 16), and who designated His Apostles not only as witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria, *i. e.*, in their immediate country, but everywhere, "even unto the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts i, 8).

The priest engaged in the cure of souls has ample opportunity to remind the faithful of their duty towards the missions. (Read magazines and reports dealing with mission activities among Indians, Negroes and Mexicans, and in the foreign missions.)

b) It is Divine in Scope

1. Christ's commission to His Apostles embraces all nations of the earth. For He who issues the mandate is the Lord of the world, being its Creator (Col. i, 16); He is the Teacher and the Light of the world (Jno. i, 9; viii, 12; xviii, 37), the Shepherd of nations (Jno. x, 16), the Redeemer of the world (Phil. ii, 7 ff.), the Judge of all mankind (Jno. v, 22). The only true religion must be a world religion.

This mission consummates the rupture with the narrow national policy of the Jewish Synagogue. The empire of Christ is to be a world empire, open to all peoples and races. Therefore, the mandate is not like that formerly addressed to the Prophets: "Go to Israel!" but: "Go to all nations!"

Christ had formerly forbidden the disciples to go to the heathen; now, after His death, He abrogates this prohibition and sends them to the whole world.

2. The perspective is suddenly widened on Mount Thabor from a view of the house of Israel to one embracing the whole world. An entirely new concept: the World-Apostolate, the World-Mission, arises for the first time. Christian universalism takes the place of pagan particularism. Time indeed will be required be-

fore this great idea can attain to recognition and acceptance; as a matter of fact the Apostle of the Gentiles is the first to give expression to it; centuries will pass before the world-mission will become a world-embracing Church. But the groundwork is laid here. Everything else will follow as a natural development of Christ's mandate.

c) It is Divine in Execution

1. Contemplate the instruments! Whom does Christ send forth to conquer the world? A handful of poor fishermen, sons of a small, isolated, despised people, whose vision till then had never extended beyond their own small country. They had not attended higher schools of learning; they knew nothing of dialectics and fiery oratory; they scarce commanded a tongue other than their own uncouth dialect. They were not preceded by the fame of great learning, noble descent, or famous exploits. They were Jews, universally despised and hated, yet they were to overcome the proud worldly wisdom of the Greeks, the conceit, drunk with victory, of the world-conquering Romans, the effeminate sensual indulgence of the Asiatics, and to win them for an entirely new, diametrically opposite concept of life.

Here a great principle of the divine government of the world entered, in its widest possible scope, into the history of the world, as the Apostle of the Gentiles forcefully emphasizes: "For the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For see your vocation, brethren, that there

are not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble. But the foolish things of the world God hath chosen, that He may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the strong. And the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible, hath God chosen, and things that are not, that He might bring to naught things that are; that no flesh should glory in His sight" (1 Cor. i, 25–29).

2. Powerful natural factors have, naturally, coöperated in the great work of the spiritual conquest of the world and the extension of the kingdom of Christ; however, there is an almost inconceivable disproportion between the great goal and the natural means employed to reach it.

It is God's work! *"Ego elegi vos et posui vos, ut eatis et fructum afferatis et fructus vester maneat"* (Jno. xv, 16).

This applies in matters great and small, and must be the consolation of every priest called to take part in the execution of the great mission.

II. The Mission Task

a) "Euntes. Go ye!"

The office of the Apostle is primarily a going, a wandering, and one of its greatest difficulties is included in this mode of life.

1. Go over the seas with their storms and reefs and depths! Go over the mountains with their steep heights

and dizzy chasms! Neither the Alps nor the Pyrenees nor the Andes nor even the Himalayas are too high for the Apostle of Christ. Go through the savannahs with their barbed grass and their blood-sucking vermin, through the oven of the Sahara with its Samum and its skeleton-marked paths. Go through the jungles of the tropics with their wild terrors, through the snowfields of the North with their frightful blizzards and icy winds!

Go onward! Forward! Let nothing halt your feet.

And they go, gasping, bathed in perspiration; even though their feet are torn and bleeding; though the end of the path seems lost in the distance; though their blood boil in their veins, their pulses throb, their eyes smart and burn; though hands and feet and other members be about to freeze and the breath congeal; though companions fall at the wayside in the weakness of death and graves become milestones on their path—they go. . . .

2. Go! Leave your country, your parental home, all the endearing places of your youth! Go out into unknown, strange lands, into an unaccustomed climate, into the world of the tropics, where everything, everything is so new, so different, so hard!

Go to all the peoples and nations of the earth, without exception! To the Jews of the far-flung diaspora and to the over-refined Greeks; to the proud Romans, drunk with the blood of nations, and to the rough-hewn, sturdy Teutons!

Go! Cross the oceans into the New World of the West, the land of the Incas and the Aztecs, to the deeply

fallen men of the forests, to the jungles of the Amazon, the basin of the La Plata, to the country of the Great Lakes, to the proud, blood-thirsty Redskins of the North, to the prairies teeming with buffalo, to the St. Lawrence and the Mississippi, to the poor Eskimos in Alaska, to the cannibal tribes along the Congo in Africa!

Go into the wide-flung realms of the East, to the Aryans and Dravidians of India, to the Mongolian peoples of China and Korea, to the Polynesians on their innumerable islands!

All these strangely varying races, forms of culture, types of peoples, from the North Pole to the South Pole, from Polynesia to Europe, are the goal. All peoples, none excepted, be they yet so primitive, yet so degraded!

3. Go! And if a tyrant's mood and bloody persecutions drive you from one country, shake the dust from your feet and go to another! Go. . . .

Go! What a grand picture is unfolded before our gaze! The entire great world-apostolate from the time of the Apostles down to our own day! All of it is the fruit of this mighty mission mandate!

Go! This word includes not only the apostolic journeyings of the Apostles among the pagans. The cure of souls at home is also in large measure a going and wandering—frequently tedious—through the endless streets of large cities, on steep mountain paths to the most remote hut, day and night, in rain and sunshine, in spite of weariness and exhaustion.

Onward! This is the command which has set the en-

tire army of Apostles, which the eye cannot envision, into motion.

Verily: *"Quam speciosi pedes evangelizantium pacem, evangelizantium bona!"* (Rom. x, 15).

Ah, how sweet will be the rest, the repose of the Apostles when, wearied with wandering, they are called to their reward!

b) *"Docete!"*

Teach! Not by force of arms, by craft or other human measures of force is mankind to be won and led to God. Go and teach—μαθητεύσατε—*i. e.*, make of all men pupils and followers of Jesus Christ by spreading His teaching!

I. The Teaching

It is to be *His* teaching. "Teach ye . . . them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. xxviii, 19–20.) His teaching, His dogmas, His laws and commandments, His promises and threats, in short, His Gospel, pure and unadulterated, not abridged or emasculated by concessions to worldly wisdom. "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a gospel to you, besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema!" (Gal. i, 8).

Think of this, priest of God, when you enter the pulpit on Sundays to read and announce the Gospel. It must be *His* teaching, and *His* manner of teaching; His clearness, His gentleness must be evident in your ser-

mon. You must preach Christ, not yourself; you must not offer man-made phrases as a miserable substitute for the true, wholesome, pure teaching of Christ.

It is undoubtedly a beautiful, comforting doctrine; but it is also replete with profound mysteries: The doctrine of the triune God and His infinite justice; the doctrine of the mystery of the Incarnation and the Redemption, of the birth of the Redeemer from a virgin and of His death on the cross; the doctrine of His miraculous Resurrection and Ascension; the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist, of grace, and of the Sacraments . . . mystery upon mystery, all utterly immersed in the supernatural, only partly to be mastered by reason, barred to the senses.

And then the teaching of the Christian moral laws, so lofty, pure and sublime, of humility, meekness, love of one's enemies, of chastity, self-denial, crucifixion of the flesh, of poverty and the scorning of temporal goods, of temperance and moderation, obedience, forgetfulness of self, etc.

And this teaching, so noble and exalted, is to break through all pseudo-wisdom, through all the maze of fantastic pagan mythology, through all the prejudices and contradictions of sensual nature.

Aye, go and teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you! Not an iota more or less!

Here we have the true Church of Christ, in which the same teachings, *His* teachings, are found, in which the same doctrines, *His* doctrines, are taught everywhere. This is true only of the Catholic Church.

II. Manner of Teaching

"Teach all nations!" Words readily spoken, but difficult of execution! The difficulty was not so great in the European countries, where Greek was the language of culture and Latin the language of law throughout the Roman Empire. But beyond the borders of this empire, and later beyond the ocean, arose the great barrier of the confusion of tongues. There are more than two thousand different languages and dialects! How can I preach the Gospel of Christ to these people without knowing their language? Hence it is necessary to hew a path through this jungle!

III. Necessity of Teaching

The teaching of truth! That is the first, the most necessary thing! What had become of truth in paganism? Whither had defection from the true idea of God led, into what a ridiculous mess of idiotic conceptions? (Cfr. Rom. i, 18 ff.; Aug., *De Civit. Dei*, Part I).

And what confusion of moral concepts existed in consequence thereof, even in Greece, otherwise so advanced, and in spite of its world-famed sages! There the Gospel was truly a sun, a light springing up in the darkness (Matt. iv, 16).

Compare the clear, positive teachings of the Gospel with present-day paganism, for instance in India.

There can be but one truth and, consequently, but one true religion. Hence the Apostle of Christ need pay no heed to existing false religions and doctrines, and

the Church of God commits no injustice in disturbing the pagan peoples in their good faith and rousing them out of their errors and making every effort to replace falsehood with truth.

"But before the faith came, we were kept under the law shut up, unto that faith which was to be revealed. Wherefore the law was our pedagogue in Christ. . . . But after the faith is come, we are no longer under a pedagogue" (Gal. iii, 23–25). If that applies to Judaism, how much more to paganism?

IV. Comfort and Force of the Gospel

The Gospel is to be carried to all because it is suitable to all, is adapted to all demands of the mind, meets all needs of the heart fully, conveys enlightenment on all great questions of the human soul without removing the chaste coverings which necessarily veil the mystery of the Infinite, the Unapproachable. The religion of Jesus Christ has enlightened and satisfied the greatest minds and rendered the most childlike believers happy.

"He that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness" (Jno. viii, 12).

"Come to Me all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Matt. xi, 28).

The teaching of Christ imparts to the pagans precisely what they need. For they sense the truth, they have all the basic ideas of the true religion, consciousness of God, need for atonement, but everything is overrun with the rank growth of error. Now the joyous

message brings them perfect clarity and full guaranties of truth.

This one truth becomes the great bond of unity. It erects a spiritual kingdom, the great communion of those united in the faith.

c) Baptizate!

1. The teaching of the truth, its recognition and acceptance, are but the first step. This truth bears within itself practical conclusions, deeply affecting life, and very hard and difficult for sensual man.

Faith alone does not suffice. Not the hearers, but the doers of the law shall be justified (Rom. ii, 13). Life must conform to faith, the Christian moral law must be observed. How difficult for man accustomed to pagan lack of discipline, *e. g.*, with respect to chastity, marriage, love of one's enemies!

Therefore, the missionary should carry not only light but also warmth, *i. e.*, the supernatural power of grace, and this warmth is to exert its influence primarily through the Sacraments, of which Baptism is designated as the first and basic prerequisite for all others. In these Sacraments the redemptive power of the Blood of Christ circulates; by Baptism a new, higher principle of life, and therewith the foundation of a new supernatural life, is imparted. What a miraculous power these means of grace have shown! They transformed Greece and Rome; they produced heroes of faith; they caused saints to arise from all nations, in all walks and

ages of life. We need but think of an Agnes, a Cecilia, a Pancratius, and a Sebastian in pagan Rome, of the martyrs of Uganda and Mexico in recent times. *"Emitte spiritum tuum et creabuntur, et renovabis faciem terrae."*

To repeat: Mankind cannot be renewed by the mere semblance of truth, or by parts of the truth, or by compromises with the spirit of the world. Naught but the unadulterated teaching, in conjunction with the grace of Christ, could save and transform the old, can save and transform the new paganism.

2. Baptism is to be administered in the name of the Blessed Trinity, the triune God.

This profound mystery is given the very first place, so that the pagans may realize from the beginning that the distinctive mark of the true God is precisely His mysterious incomprehensibility. Baptism, therefore, implies a denunciation of all idolatry, a disavowal of every form of idol worship.

III. Sanction of the Mission

a) The Accompanying Miraculous Signs (Mark xvi, 17 ff.)

1. The Necessity of Miracles. It is the task of the missionaries to transform pagans into Christians, an extraordinarily difficult task; for:

a) As a general rule, men cling to the traditional religion of their ancestors, and consequently are hostile to innovation.

b) The Christian religion imposes great demands on reason and will, far more exacting than those made by the other religions.

c) A change of religion implies a radical change, a complete transformation and an entirely new ordering of life in thought and action. It is a real rebirth.

d) Religion influences all phases of life—family relations, marriage, the position of husband, wife, and child, the relations of life in the community. One need think only of the Hindu caste system.

e) Pagan religions are mostly State religions, involving a species of emperor-worship. Thus the old pagan religions were deeply rooted in the entire cultural life. A change of religion, therefore, signified a revolution against the existing order, against a revered traditional culture.

Therefore, God must coöperate in the conversion of pagans by special proofs of His omnipotence. As Christ authenticated His mission and paved the way for His teaching with the aid of miracles, so, too, must the apostle of the Christian religion prove his mission by evidences of a higher power, *i. e.*, by miracles.

As Christ equipped His disciples at their first mission with the gift of miracles (Luke x, 1 ff.), so He could not but do likewise when sending them into the great wide world of paganism. If the world were converted to Christ without a miracle, that would be a miracle; it would be a miracle a hundredfold greater than all miracles (Dante, *Paradiso,* xxiv, 106; Augustine, *De Civ. Dei,* xxiv, c. 5).

2. The Apostolic testimony to miracles. The con-

ferring of the gift of miracles does not signify that every Christian possesses it, but that miracles were to play a part in the spread of Christianity. Essentially a few miraculous events would have sufficed for this (cfr. 1 Cor. xii, 6).

In reality we see that the Apostles wrought numerous miracles on their later as on their former mission. The Acts of the Apostles are full of them. Miraculous powers also accompanied the successors of the Apostles, all the great messengers of the Gospel, on their apostolic journeys: a Gregory Thaumaturgus, a St. Patrick, a Columban, an Ansgar, a Francis Xavier, a Francis Solanus, and many others. Even in most recent times we find wonder-workers, as, for instance, Mgr. Poel in China.

Miracles everywhere accompany the early pioneer work, the first steps of the great envoys of Christ. When Christianity has taken root and has gained strength, it no longer needs the first tender care.

3. The driving out of devils plays a remarkable rôle in the life of our Lord and of all messengers of the Gospel. In pagan lands the devil is in possession; before anything can be accomplished, he must be driven out, and he yields only to force. Hence, the exorcisms in the baptismal rite; hence also the sacramentals. Mark the beautiful prayers recited at the blessing of Holy Water. The old temples of the demons have, in fact, fallen; the oracles are silent; the gods have gradually retreated; paganism can no longer withstand the bright sunlight of Christianity (cfr. *Vita Sti. Galli;* Tert., *Ap.* c. 23; Eus., *Praep. Evang.*, l. v, c. 1).

The gift of tongues is evidenced for the first time on Pentecost and frequently thereafter in the early Church (1 Cor. xii, 10; xiv, 23). Later it is met with more rarely.

4. These gifts and powers are merely concomitant aids, supporting the preaching, particularly among peoples of such low intellectual status as not to be able to grasp the truth directly. It must be brought home to them by evidences of power which they can perceive with the aid of the senses.

Even in the time of Christ miracles were only a secondary means of evangelization; the chief factors were His personality, His holiness, His word, His teaching. The miracles He wrought were quite evidently accessory aids, attracting attention and proving that a superior power spoke through Him. "*Si mihi non vultis credere, operibus credite.*" (Jno. xi, 38).

In our day, in lieu of miracles other convincing arguments speak for the truth of the Gospel in pagan countries. Christianity is now a great universal fact, a sign in the heavens, visible to all. Whoever wishes to see, may see.

To this must be added, in the true Church, the continued intellectual and spiritual miracles of the confessional, of the Lord's table, the miracles of the saints, the supernatural indestructibility of the Church in spite of all storms, the miracle of her unity.

Note how the Lord provides His emissaries not only with authority, but also with the power of working miracles. No king has ever identified Himself so fully

with his envoys as Christ does. This thought should help us realize the greatness and glory of the priesthood and the apostolate. Nothing can surpass it.

b) The Divine Sanction

"He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be condemned" (Mark xvi, 16).

1. The message of salvation imposes a serious obligation. Whoever hears it and recognizes its truth, must accept it in faith and gratitude and attach himself by Baptism to the kingdom of God on earth. On the other hand, whoever opposes the truth and refuses to accept the proffered grace of salvation, incurs the curse of rejection. Whoever refuses to enter the ark of salvation will perish in the flood. Whoever will not raise his eyes to the bronze serpent, will die from the fangs of venomous reptiles. Faith and Baptism, therefore, are indispensable prerequisites for eternal happiness.

2. However, this applies only to those who have heard the Gospel. They alone can declare for or against it, and they alone can be affected by the sanctions attached to its acceptance or rejection.

The greater portion of the pagan world, to which the message of salvation has not yet penetrated, or which has no adequate knowledge of it, does not fall under this condemnation. For as St. Paul says: "How shall they believe Him, of whom they have not heard? And

how shall they hear, without a preacher? . . . Faith then cometh by hearing; and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. x, 14, 17).

Indeed, the Apostle adds: "But I say: Have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the whole world" (Rom. x, 18). This applies to the then known world; but beyond it lay the great pagan world across the seas, in the virgin forests of America and Africa, in the vast countries of Central and Eastern Asia, in Australia and the islands—extensive territories not yet included in the picture of the world as Paul saw it.

3. Disregard of this distinction, obvious though it was, is responsible for the severe views of some early theologians regarding the fate of the pagan world. Without further ado they regarded it as "*massa damnata*," included in the sentence of rejection. A contributing factor was their imperfect, faulty concept of paganism, in which they saw only, or at least predominantly, the negative features.

What, then, are we to think of the peoples to whom the message of faith has not yet been borne? The pronouncement: "He that believeth not shall be condemned" does not apply to them unconditionally, since they could take no attitude towards the Gospel, neither one of acceptance nor of rejection. It is certain that they, too, are embraced by the *voluntas Dei salvifica*, that Christ died also for them, and that therefore they too can be saved.

IV. Success of the Mission

"But they going forth preached everywhere: the Lord working withal, and confirming the word with signs that followed" (Mark xvi, 20).

a) What splendid men, what a marvelous generation of Apostles has been born, as it were, of this mission mandate! There are first the Twelve who laid the groundwork of the Apostolic Church and gave testimony to it in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the then known world—by preaching and working and with their blood! There is Paul, the prototype of an Apostle! There are the great apostles of the Celtic, the Anglo-Saxon, the Teutonic, the Slavic races! There are the missionaries of the age of discovery! There are, finally, the emissaries of the Gospel in our own days! How numerous they are, constituting entire congregations!

We must add to these the priests who exercise the *cura ordinaria*, which is no less important, and today certainly is not a *sinecure*. Among these shepherds of souls in all countries and provinces, in city and country, some 370,000 altogether,—how many true apostles may be found! All stood before the eyes of the Lord as, viewing the future, He sent His Apostles into the world. I, too, am one of His envoys. He sent me on His mission!

This mission applies not merely to the preacher, but to the teacher and writer as well. What the latter teach and write also goes forth among the people, bringing

them light, comfort, edification. And the more thoroughly such labors are steeped in the blood of sacrifice, the more toil and care is devoted to them, the more fruitful will they prove to souls, the more effectively will they contribute to the internal and external upbuilding of the kingdom of Christ.

Aye, the apostles of the pen are also sent forth by Christ. It is not without significance that a number of the Twelve undertook the task of writing. Paul in particular was a great writer, and if he lived today, writing would perhaps be his chief occupation!

b) Activities inspired by Christ's mission mandate. If we could survey the wonderful apostolate which had its inception on Thabor's heights, what a sum-total of heroism, of unselfish surrender, bold initiative, patient perseverance, love, fidelity, prudence, foresight we could admire!

Great dangers were confronted, enormous hardships and privations endured, bitter disappointments suffered, sweet consolations received! The history of the Church, the Acts of the Martyrs, the chronicles of the religious communities, the year books of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith record the glorious fulfilment of Christ's mandate!

c) Fruits of the mission mandate. Slowly the world-mission grew into a world empire. "But they going forth preached everywhere." At the time when Mark recorded these words, the Gospel had been preached in all the Mediterranean countries and beyond in Asia Minor and Near Asia. The conquest advanced into Gaul, Germany, Scandinavia, and the Slavic countries

of the East. In the course of twelve centuries all of Europe was Christianized. Then the missionary task was transferred to the New World and the Far East. Today the Church embraces a world empire of three hundred million souls. What the Prophet had dimly foreseen, and what the Lord had foretold: "They shall come from the east and the west, and the north and the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God" (Luke xiii, 29), has become a reality. The great world empire of the Catholic Church, embracing all countries and all peoples, is a glorious fact. The development, of course, is not yet completed; the stage at which there shall be one shepherd and one flock has not yet been reached; but fulfilment is being approached steadily and surely.

Territorially the greatest portion of the world, three entire continents—Europe, America, and Australia—and vast sections of the other parts are Christian. In China, for instance, there are 20,000 mission stations. The Christian view of life is constantly gaining ground. The laws of Japan are based on a Christian foundation. A good Catholic coöperated in their framing.

Numerically, too, the great majority of mankind is monotheistic. The eight hundred million pagans are by no means a homogeneous mass, but, under the influence of the Christian leaven, are approaching the truth. The old paganism can no longer hold its own.

Much indeed is still wanting. And if a number of peoples, as for instance those of Europe, prove themselves increasingly unworthy of the grace conferred

upon them; their place may, in course of time, be taken by other races. Hence there is still very much to do and we must take up our work courageously. Everyone to his post! Christ is with us!

VIII. THE LORD'S DEPARTURE

I. THE MYSTERY OF THE ASCENSION

THE Church prays: *"Per admirabilem ascensionem tuam."* And it is indeed a marvelous, unique mystery, of great significance for the Church and for each individual faithful soul.

I. The Fact of the Ascension

a) Some writers interpret passages in the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament as pointing to the Ascension, and the Apostle of the Gentiles (Eph. iv, 8) does not hesitate to assign this meaning to the Sixty-seventh Psalm (cfr. Ps. viii; xxiii; xlvi; Ezech. xi, 23; Zach. xiv, 4. Elias as a type: 4 Kings ii, 11).

b) It is a fact that Our Lord Himself repeatedly directed attention to His Ascension. "Amen, Amen, I say to you, you shall see the Heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (Jno. i, 51).

"And no man hath ascended to Heaven but He that descended from Heaven, the Son of man, who is in Heaven" (Jno. iii, 13).

When His disciples found His words, spoken at the

promise of the Eucharist, hard and difficult, He said: "Doth this scandalize you? If then you shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before?" (Jno. vi, 63).

"*Vado ad patrem*" expresses the note of joy struck again and again in His parting address, relieving the pain of separation.

c) The Evangelists testify clearly and unequivocally to the Ascension. "And the Lord Jesus . . . was taken up into Heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God" (Mark xvi, 19). St. Luke records: "And it came to pass, whilst He blessed them, He departed from them and was carried up to Heaven" (xxiv, 51). More explicitly in the Acts of the Apostles: "And when He had said these things, while they looked on, He was raised up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight" (i, 9). The two angels also confirm the Ascension: "This Jesus who is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come, as you have seen Him going into Heaven" (Acts i, 11).

Although Matthew and John do not specifically record the Ascension at its proper place, they nevertheless cite clear references of Our Lord to His going to Heaven. Thus John has Jesus say to Mary Magdalen: "I am not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them: I ascend to My Father and to your Father, to My God and your God" (xx, 17). And Matthew reports that the Lord repeatedly refers to His return from Heaven (xxiv, 30; xxvi, 64). But that presupposes the Ascension.

Moreover, the Ascension was the logical consequence of the Resurrection, since the glorified body of Christ could not remain on earth. Therefore, it is simply enumerated by the Evangelists in the sequence of the manifestations of Jesus and either noticed briefly or, like many other happenings, passed over entirely.

d) In Apostolic times not only the external fact of the Ascension, but also its dogmatically important result, the sitting at the right hand of God, is emphatically insisted upon (cfr. Acts ii, 33 ff.; iii, 20; v, 31; Eph. i, 19, iv, 8 ff.; Hebr. viii, 1; 1 Pet. iii, 21).

Ecclesiastical tradition dating from the earliest days is recorded for all times in the various creeds, the Apostles', the Nicene, the Athanasian, etc.

A special feast of the Ascension was so well established even at the time of St. Augustine that he groups it among those ecclesiastical institutions which owe their origin either to the Apostles or the decision of an ecumenical council.

II. Significance of the Ascension

a) *For the Apostles.* Christ's visible Ascension to Heaven rendered the reality of the life beyond, of the going up to the Father, overwhelmingly clear. No other mystery has substantiated this truth more thoroughly and vividly.

If Jesus had suddenly disappeared in the absence of the Apostles that would have left a certain impression of unreality and would not have satisfied them. How diffi-

cult had it not been to convince them of the Resurrection, which they had not seen with their own eyes. Would they have been convinced of the Ascension if it had not taken place visibly, in their sight? "I go to the Father," Jesus had said; now they have witnessed His departure and return joyously to Jerusalem.

Christ's sojourn on earth is thus appropriately concluded in harmony with a grand revelation of His glory and power. This fact becomes a source of inexhaustible strength for the Apostles and the great task assigned to them. There could be nothing more effective, nothing greater than the Ascension.

b) *For us.* This glorious mystery strengthens our faith. Our knowledge of Christ and His divinity, reverence for His greatness and glory must also increase mightily.

New nourishment is provided for our hope by observing how Christ is rewarded. As man, He could acquire merits for Himself, merit glory and glorification, and He has done so by His obedience, His faithful devotion to His arduous mission, by His humiliation (Hebr. ii, 9; Luke xxiv, 26). And how great His reward! Suffering is exchanged for eternal joy, humiliation for elevation, the cross for the throne of God, the crown of thorns for the diadem of glory, disgrace for adoration! (Phil. ii, 9).

On this our trust is grounded; for the Saviour is our head and leader, His victory is our victory. He shows us the way and the goal of all earthly endeavor, the crowning of all sufferings. He grants us the hope

and the guarantee that we shall follow Him to where He sits in His glory. *"Et si abiero et praeparavero vobis locum, iterum venio et accipiam vos ad meipsum, ut ubi sum ego, et vos sitis"* (Jno. xiv, 3).

We know that we have an advocate and protector in Heaven (1 Jno. ii, 1). *"Ideo ascendit, ut nos desuper protegeret"* (Chrys., *Hom. de Temp.*, 174).

The Lord's ascent into Heaven, finally, rouses the longing to follow Him. *"Ascendisti in altum, cepisti captivitatem"* (Ps. lxvii, 19) applies also to the hearts of His followers, whom He takes with Him as captives, so to speak.

Ah, the longing for Heaven of holy souls—of a Paul, who desired to be dissolved, to be with Christ; of a Francis of Assisi; of an Aloysius (*"Quid hoc ad aeternitatem?"*); of an Ignatius ("How disgusted I am with earth when I gaze on Heaven!"): beacon lights of our distant home!

The thought of Heaven and eternity is the great, powerful motive which imparts courage to the martyrs, perseverance to the penitents, fidelity to the virgins.

II. THE LAST MEAL AND THE PARTING ADDRESS

(Luke xxiv, 44–49; Acts i, 4 f.)

I. The Last Meal

a) When friends part, they arrange a repast. That was done here also. "Eating together with them" (Acts

i, 4). This meal undoubtedly took place in the hall of the Last Supper, which was hallowed by sacred memories and thenceforth continued to serve as the assembly hall of the young Church of the Apostles, for purposes of divine service.

b) We have already noted that the Lord, after His Resurrection, made all the more important revelations at a meal (Emmaus, the appearance in the chamber, at Lake Tiberias).

This may have given rise to the early Christian *agape*. A banquet unites the participants, joins the hearts, increases the sense of solidarity, creates a joyous mood. And that is precisely what Our Lord desires. Thus the Eucharistic banquet has continued to be the bond of unity. At this table of the Lord all are to feel that they are brethren, children of one family, guests and companions of Christ.

c) This parting repast is a reminder of the Last Supper and evidently was intended to be, in a sense, a continuation of it.

On that occasion Christ had promised to return, that their joy would be great. His promise has been gloriously fulfilled. How sweet the forty days have been! At that time He spoke of going home to the Father. Now they are to see His return home with their own eyes.

At that time they were close to Him, but now they are much closer, their love is more profund, more refined, more cordial. Then His humanity was more prominently in the foreground; now His divinity commands their attention.

II. The Parting Address

The Master on this occasion probably repeated some words of comfort He had spoken at the Last Supper and which were equally appropriate now: *"Vado ad patrem"—"vado vobis parare locum"—"expedit vobis, ut ego vadam,"* and the like. To these He attached several highly significant *lessons.*

a) He instructed them concerning the relation of the Old Testament to His Church. "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me" (Luke xxiv, 44).

The teaching of Christ, therefore, is not a revolution, not an abrogation of the Old Law, as the Scribes and Pharisees presented it, but its continuation, fulfilment, and consummation. Christianity is the ripe fruit of the Old Law. The prophecies point to the Messias to come; their subject, therefore, is Christ. The Lord had emphasized this time and again and had quoted the authority of the prophecies (cfr., *inter alia*, Matt. xxvi, 56; Luke xxiv, 25; Jno. v, 45).

It was highly important that the Apostles should recognize this, since at first their Apostolate was to embrace Jewish individuals and communities, which, scattered throughout the world, were to form the first supports of Christianity. The fact that they could prove from the Scriptures, which were held in such high regard, that all the Messianic prophecies, chiefly the Passion and death of the Messias, and His glorification

in the Resurrection, had been fulfilled in Christ, must have made a profound impression.

b) Jesus determines content and object of the preaching of the Apostles. Their purpose is that "penance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in His name unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke xxiv, 47).

Christianity is thereby designated as the message of redemption from sin and guilt.

The first theme of the message to the peoples and nations of the earth is, therefore, forgiveness of sins as the fruit of the Passion and death of Christ—a truly joyous message, the proclamation of the great jubilee of reconciliation, the great remission of sins. Nothing more welcome could be offered to mankind entrapped in the maze of guilt and sin and sighing to be delivered.

To this is to be added penance. Pardon and penance belong together. Penance must come first. The death of Christ as the redemptive act is, therefore, by no means a license for sinners; justification is not brought about by the mere acceptance of the grace of redemption; *fides fiducialis* is not, as Luther teaches, sufficient. Conditions for participation in the fruits of redemption are penance—*i. e.*, severance from oneself, from selfishness, self-indulgence, sinful desire, even from external goods, inasfar as they detract from Christ and are in contradiction to His spirit; and atonement, *i. e.*, punishment of self, hence chastisement of the sinful body by fasting, as Christ taught and the Apostles practised it (Rom. vi, 13 ff.; xii, 1; Col. iii, 5).

The content and purpose of Christian preaching are thus indicated and determined.

This preaching of penance and atonement was nothing new for the people of those days; on the contrary, it corresponded to mankind's deeply rooted need of atonement, which finds soul-stirring expression even in paganism.

Here, however, the preachment dealt with a penance which truly conveyed atonement and reconciliation, and therewith also comfort and liberation, because it was proclaimed in the name of the Redeemer and derived atoning force from His Passion.

c) Jesus instructs them to remain in Jerusalem and to prepare themselves for the coming of the Holy Ghost.

The Apostles might have preferred to return, after the Ascension, to Galilee, whither they had previously been directed to go. But the Master says: "Stay you in the city till you be endued with power from on high" (Luke xxiv, 49). "He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but should wait for the promise of the Father, which you have heard (saith He) by My mouth" (Acts i, 4).

In this very city the keystone of the arch of the young Church is to be set on the rapidly approaching feast of Pentecost; here the first great draught of fishes is to be made with the net of the Church; here the disciples are to stand their first test as disciples of Christ; here, in the great city, is to be established the first Christian parish; here the kingdom of Christ is to have its beginning.

The thought of the great task of carrying the doctrine of Christ out into the world may have frightened the disciples and given them cause for worry; but the Lord encouraged them by pointing to the power that was to come from above. "Behold, I shall send down upon you the promise of the Father . . . John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts i, 5).

III. THE WAY TO THE MOUNT OF THE ASCENSION

(Luke xxiv, 50; Acts i, 6 ff.)

I. The Way

Mount Olivet was the goal of the journey, as is clear from Acts i, 12. "Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount that is called Olivet, which is nigh Jerusalem, within a sabbath-day's journey." The Saviour, however, made a detour over Bethania. "And He led them out as far as Bethany" (Luke xxiv, 50). From there the way led to the middle peak of the Mount of Olives, where, tradition tells us, the Ascension took place. Possibly the Lord wished to pay a final visit to the village He had so frequently sojourned in, or He may have intended to take its inhabitants with Him to witness the last great manifestation.

Forty-three days earlier the Lord had passed along the same way in the company of the Eleven—then under the burden of the impending Passion, "sorrowful unto death." How utterly different is this journey in the transfigured body towards glorification!

For us, too, the way of suffering, leading to Mount Olivet, will become the way to the Mount of the Ascension.

II. The Company

They were the same who later, in the hall of the Last Supper, awaited the coming of the Holy Spirit: "But stay you in the city till you be endued with power from on high" (Luke xxiv, 49). They were Mary, the Apostles and many disciples—in all some 120 persons (Acts i, 15).

The Lord walks in their midst, the Shepherd in the midst of His flock, the General surrounded by His faithful soldiers, the Teacher among His pupils. Cordial, dignified, yet condescending, more beautiful now than before, the aureole of transfiguration about His countenance and His entire person.

By this time the disciples are accustomed to His appearance, and the old cordial relations have been reestablished. The little group is animated by a sense of joy, slightly subdued by thoughts of the parting, now so near at hand.

Peter walks at the Master's right hand. He is fully rehabilitated. His election as Pope has not been set aside, but solemnly confirmed. Peter knows he is the one who is to shepherd the little flock in the Lord's name and by His authority, and to guide it as His representative.

At the left walks John, the disciple whom Jesus loved—loves more now than before, since he has proved

his loyalty so admirably and has been designated the protector of Christ's holy mother.

There, too, is Thomas, who is eager to make amends for his former fault by redoubled zeal, and the other Apostles, each enjoying a special relation to the Lord.

Assuredly the disciples of Emmaus, their hearts again burning at His nearness, were present, and Lazarus, whom He had called friend, and Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea, who had performed the last services on His body, Simon of Cyrene with his two sons, Alexander and Rufus, and also Longinus.

Follows the group of holy women (Acts i, 14) walking with Mary, the Mother of Jesus: Magdalen, Martha, Mary Salome, Mary of James, Mary of Joseph, Mary of Cleophas, Veronica, and the others, all in festive mood, for the Master had conferred special grace upon them.

III. The Conversation

a) On the way the Lord gives them a few additional instructions and comforts them by pointing to His continued Eucharistic presence among them, for which He had prepared them during the forty days of His sojourn.

b) A question asked by the disciples, probably on this occasion, has been preserved for us: "They, therefore, who were come together, asked Him, saying: Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts i, 6). This question indicates how strongly the disciples were still influenced by un-

clarified temporal hopes concerning the Messias. However, we can understand these hopes. Now that they have been witnesses of the Resurrection, have experienced such marvelous happenings, and have heard of the "kingdom of God," the question appears plausible. For He Himself had said that all things had been fulfilled which the prophets had foretold concerning Him. But the prophets described the Messianic kingdom in the most brilliant colors, and many passages could readily be interpreted as applying to an earthly realm (cfr. Abd. i, 17; Amos ix, 11; Osee xiv, 6; Joel iii, 20). Moreover, love for the Master inspired the wish that He might now, immediately, be glorified as the King of Israel, and that He might reveal Himself to the people whose fate was so great a concern to His heart.

c) The Master's reply is meek and mild. This last hour is not to be marred by serious reproof.

He does not enter into their concept, still imperfect and hazy, of the Messias; the Holy Spirit would have to change their inner selves.

Nor does He deny that great things are imminent, but He leaves the time of their occurrence to the Father.

"He said to them: It is not for you to know the times or moments which the Father hath put in His own power" (Acts i, 7).

Place everything confidently into the Father's hands, therefore! Think how well He has disposed all things till now, far beyond your expectations! Let Him continue to act according to His wisdom and might!

Do we not also ask similar questions in our impatience? When will God lead the Church to final victory? When shall the great day of triumph come? We are ever impatient to see the concluding triumph of the good cause at home and in distant mission countries. The words: "It is not for you to know . . ." apply to us also. Leave that to the Lord of destinies!

With God everything moves quietly, according to plan, without leaps and bounds, adapting itself to the natural factors; the kingdom of Christ will attain to consummation by slow development, the fruit will ripen in long periods of time—oft-times all too long in our opinion, short-lived children of men as we are. God, however, counts by centuries and decades of centuries.

d) The rest will be told them by the Holy Ghost. "You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you" (Acts i, 8).

At the same time He enlarges their vision. Their sole thought is ever of their small Israel. The first and nearest scene of their apostolic preaching and success is, indeed, to be among its children. "You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria," but then also, "even to the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts i, 8). Thus He reminds them of the words He had spoken on the mountain, which had directed their gaze far beyond the narrow boundaries of their home country. The idea of the world-church flashes upon their minds in this last momentous hour.

According to an ancient tradition, preserved among the first Christians (Euseb., *Vita Const.*, l. III, c. 43)

the Lord—because His public appearance in Jerusalem was not advisable nor appropriate—performed the sacred mysteries in a mountain cavern, so that the *"Hoc facite in meam commemorationem"* might be vividly impressed upon His followers. In a measure the lack of clearness of the Evangelists with respect to the place of the Ascension might be similarly explained.

IV. THE ASCENSION

"He led them out as far as Bethania, and lifting up His hands He blessed them. And it came to pass, whilst He blessed them, He departed from them and was carried up to Heaven. And they adoring went back into Jerusalem with great joy" (Luke xxiv, 50–52).

"And when He had said these things, while they looked on, He was raised up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight" (Acts i, 9).

I. The Final Leave-Taking

a) Now they have arrived at the peak. The hour of parting approaches. One thought, one emotion dominates the disciples: this is the last time they are to see and hear Him. Spontaneously the circle surrounding Him is drawn closer, as medieval paintings portray the scene so touchingly. All are eager to impress His image upon their memory and to seize upon each of His words as a legacy.

b) The Master's heart, too, feels the pang of parting.

He loves them, and knows what His departure must mean to them. Therefore, He gives them all a proof of His particular love. He embraces them one by one and gives them a parting kiss, *"unumquemque osculatus est in intimo amore cordis"* (Ludolphus); and a particular word of love and friendly admonition. "Peter, confirm thy brethren," He may have said to His vicar, and to John: "Behold thy mother! Be a good son to her!" And to all: "My little children, the hour has come when I must go to the Father. Be not disconsolate! Remain in My love! Be confident, for I am always with you!"

What would He have told *me*, as a last admonition?

According to some, He permitted all to kiss His feet before His departure. This would seem to indicate the origin of the custom of kissing the pope's foot.

II. The Final Benediction

a) And now it is as if the bell tinkled at Elevation. All kneel in silence, stirred by profound emotion, round about Him, and "lifting up His hands, He blessed them" (Luke xxiv, 50). The hands adorned with the rubies of the sacred wounds are raised above them in benediction. This is the first pontifical blessing of the Bishop of our souls, imparted *urbi et orbi*.

b) This elevation and laying-on of hands as a sign of the conferring of and desire to impart goods of a higher order was a very ancient custom, common even among the Patriarchs (cfr. Gen. xlviii, 14; Exod. xvii,

11; Lev. ix, 22). It is a privilege of the priesthood and of venerable old age. *"Quod minus est, a meliore benedicitur"* (Hebr. vii, 7).

Very probably the Lord employed the sign of the cross in giving His blessing and the Church learned to do so from Him, as St. Basil maintains (*De Spir. S.*, c. 37). *"Ex loco isto duxit ecclesia in consuetudinem, quod episcopi in fine missae dent benedictionem"* (Ludolphus).

c) The higher the dignity of the one imparting benediction and the greater the esteem in which he is held, the greater the value and potency attached to his blessing. How highly the people esteem the papal benediction, the blessing of a bishop, a priest, particularly if he is a saintly priest!

"In recessu suo benedixit Christus discipulis sicut pater recedens a filiis benedicit eis et hoc fecit primo propter maiorem eorum necessitatem secundum illud: Cum essem cum eis, ego servabam eos etc., ubi petit eos post recessum suum servari a malo. Secundo ad ostendendam finalem et perseverantem erga eos suam dilectionem secundum illud: Cum dilexisset suos, qui erant in mundo, in finem dilexit eos. Instruxit etiam per hoc superiores in Ecclesia, ut recedentes a subditis benedictionibus eos Deo commendent" (Ludolphus).

Albert the Great designates this blessing as *"benedictio confirmationis."*

Think of the Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament at the close of a devotion, before the Lord withdraws into the tabernacle.

III. Christ Carried up to Heaven

"And it came to pass whilst He blessed them, He departed from them and was carried up to Heaven" (Luke xxiv, 51).

a) And now the great event occurs—the revelation of His Divinity. While hitherto it was chiefly His admirable human nature that revealed itself to them, now they are to view His divine nature in a tangible, glorious manner.

As the setting sun casts a final beautifying glow over hill and vale, His figure grows radiant in marvelous transfiguration, His eyes gleam, His garments radiate a bright light.

Once before He had become transfigured before three of His disciples, and Peter had been completely beside himself with rapture at that time. Now everything is much grander. A marvelous sunset—earth and Heaven, both radiant, blend together in a wondrous picture.

b) He departed from them, not suddenly, as did Elias when he ascended in the fiery chariot, but with marvelous calm and majesty. *"Per admirabilem ascensionem tuam,"* the Church prays, thereby fittingly describing the character of the Ascension, so marvelous, altogether supernatural, and withal so simple.

The scene is like that of the mighty final radiance and slow, gradual extinction of sun-light! The disciples notice a transformation taking place in Him, in which they can have no part, and which, they feel dimly, puts an end to all further converse with Him. Their Lord and God stands before them in His full

grandeur, as the Light of the world, the eternal Glory of God.

"And now glorify Thou Me, O Father, with Thyself, with the glory which I had, before the world was, with Thee" (Jno. xvii, 5).

This was to be the last and grandest revelation of His Divinity. "Thus He shall return," the two angelic messengers afterwards declare. We know that He will return in the clouds of Heaven, with much power and majesty (Matt. xxiv, 30; xxvi, 64).

c) The picture of His glory is impressed deeply upon their minds and hearts. The most profound, the most sacred reverence is evidenced in every word of their letters in which mention is made of Him.

This marvelous revelation also served the purpose of soothing the pain of parting. It is dissolved in rapture, in an ecstasy of amazement and consolation. They no longer think of themselves, but only of Him and His glory.

IV. The Last Glance

"And while they were beholding Him going up to Heaven. . . ." (Acts i, 10).

a) All gaze upon the ascending Saviour, their eyes showing amazement, love, longing, rapt admiration at the unique sight, joy over the glory of the Lord; but His image is reflected with varying radiance in the eyes of each.

b) Mary's last glance is that of deep mother-love. He, her all, her sole happiness, is leaving her. Un-

consciously she lifts up her arms as though she would follow Him.

"O quam libenter mater cum filio de hoc mundo recessisset, sed eam ad tempus hic manere Dominus voluit, quia propter confirmandos credentes utile et expediens fuit: nostrae etiam fidei necessarium erat, quia ipsa post ascensionem Domini inter Apostolos conversando, multa eis revelavit, quae de mysteriis illius cognoverat" (Ludolphus).

Magdalen's last glance is that of a woman loving Jesus. *"Nondum ascendi ad patrem."* He had comforted her then. But now He is going away. "Rabboni! My Master!" she calls after Him.

Peter's last glance: *"Tu es Christus, filius Dei vivi!"*

John's last glance, a glance of mystic, glowing love, intimately united with God!

Nathanael recalls the words of the Master, spoken at his calling: "Amen, amen, I say to you, ye shall see the heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (Jno. i, 51).

Nicodemus remembers the mysterious words uttered by the Master in that memorable conversation at night: "And no man hath ascended into Heaven save He that descended from Heaven, the Son of man, who is in Heaven" (Jno. iii, 13).

V. The Cloud

"And a cloud received Him out of their sight" (Acts i, 9).

a) Clouds play a rôle at all great divine revelations

(Ps. ciii, 3; Ex. xiv, 20; xxiv, 15; Num. ix, 15; Matt. xvii, 5, etc.). They are to form the throne, the *sedes gestatoria* of glory, when Christ returns as Judge of the world.

A brilliant cloud strikingly suggests to the onlookers the glory of Heaven, of which it has seemingly caught a ray, the while it veils the inner sanctuary like a precious curtain.

This precious curtain is drawn aside to permit the passage of the King of glory, who, adorned with all the insignia of His majesty, concludes His earthly career with a grand revelation of His divinity.

It is a fitting finale. Everything is as grand, yet as natural and appropriate, as if it could not possibly be otherwise—the final chord of the life of Christ!

b) The Saviour, too, cast a last glance upon the scenes of His labors, on Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jerusalem—a last glance on the earth—His life had covered thirty-three years. How short, yet how rich in content were the years that lay between the manger and the Ascension! Sixteen hours of the Passion, three hours on the cross—long, bitter hours, yet how brief when compared with eternal glory! It is true: *"Non sunt condignae"* (Rom. viii, 18). One understands the magnanimity of the Saints. They measure with the standard of eternity: *"Quid hoc ad aeternitatem?"*

c) We do not know what occurred after the cloud had concealed the Lord from human gaze. The Apostles were not permitted to view the later events. The entry into Heaven took place behind the curtain that divides the world below from the world above.

Nor was it necessary for them to see more, since the prediction of Christ and the testimony of the angels, in conjunction with what the Apostles had seen, sufficed fully to establish the fact of the Ascension.

Just as no earthly eye saw the Incarnation and the Resurrection of Christ, so too none saw the Ascension proper (cfr. Chrys., *Hom. de Asc.*).

Under the *Eucharistic symbols,* too, the Saviour is concealed as by a cloud.

All too often some cloud or cloudlet deprives us of the comfort of His presence.

V. CHRIST'S ENTRY INTO HEAVEN

I. The Escort

a) A festive procession befits a great feast. The Roman generals celebrated their victories with splendid parades, a few memorials of which remain to this day in the shape of monumental triumphal arches. On great feast-days in the Church we usually have a procession escorting the Blessed Sacrament.

b) St. Paul alone has a reference to the Lord's escort on His entry into Heaven in his letter to the Ephesians (iv, 8): "Wherefore he saith: Ascending on high He led captivity captive." The phrase quoted here is from the Psalms (~~67~~ 68, 19) and is explained by the Fathers and exegetes as signifying that the Lord was accompanied by the souls of the just of the Old Testament, liberated from Limbo, from Adam to the peni-

tent thief. The liturgy of the Church is in agreement with this assumption.

"Et ascendens Dominus Jesus duxit secum illam multitudinem nobilem. . . . captivos a captivitate inferni, quos secum victor eduxerat. . . . Dominus itaque gloriosus, candidus et rubicundus, splendidus et gaudiosus praecedebat eos, viam eis ostendens et ipsi sequebantur eum cantantes et iubilantes" (Ludolphus).

c) A dim replica of this procession is the picture of the missionary entering his mission station accompanied by Negroes whose freedom he has purchased at the slave-mart, and received with rejoicing.

The priest, too, who is zealous for souls, will be welcomed with joy at his arrival in Heaven by the souls he has saved.

II. The Entry

a) Heaven never witnessed a greater feast than the day on which the Son of God, made man, victoriously entered the celestial realm. The bells are ringing, the organ is pealing, and all the choirs of angels soar jubilantly towards Him, singing their *Ecce sacerdos!*

The Fathers, carried away by enthusiasm, describe this entry into Heaven with the words of the Twenty-third Psalm: *"Attollite portas principes vestras et elevamini portae aeternales: et introibit rex gloriae."*

"Viderunt et coelites cuncti speciosum vulneribus Christum, spolia e castris tyrannicis reportantem, et admirantes fulgentis divinae virtutis vexilla talibus

concrepant hymnis deducuntque lactantes: Quis est iste rex gloriae?" (Aug., *Hom. de Resurr.*, 5).

b) With what sacred reverence the hosts of Angels hailed the God-Man; with what joy the souls of the just, destined to take the places of the fallen angels, greeted Him! The doors of Heaven are thrown wide open, and the well-ordered triumphal procession, with the Saviour in its midst, enters the eternal halls.

c) Similarly glorious entries into Heaven were celebrated later as often as a victorious, faithful warrior of the army of Christ, a saint, foremost of all the Queen of the Saints, marched into Heaven.

III. The Enthronization

a) Now the word of the Lord is fulfilled: "I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. And now glorify Thou Me, O Father, with the glory which I had, before the world was, with Thee" (Jno. xvii, 4 f.).

The Father assigns to Him, that is, to the humanity joined to the Eternal Word, the place at His right hand. A Child of man on the throne of the Deity! *"Dixit Dominus Domino meo: Sede a dextris meis!"* (Ps. cix, 1). God's equal in power and honor, elevated above all the choir of the angels! *"Ad quem autem angelorum dixit aliquando: Sede a dextris meis!"* (Hebr. 1, 13).

As a reward for His obedience He gives Him a name "which is above all names, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in

Heaven, on earth, and under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father" (Phil. ii, 9–11).

Heaven renders homage to the King of glory and in chords of marvelous beauty the royal hymn of homage resounds: *"Dignus est Agnus, qui occisus est, accipere virtutem et divinitatem et sapientiam et fortitudinem et honorem et gloriam et benedictionem"* (Apoc. v, 12).

b) For the human nature of Christ, at least in its physical aspect, Heaven is, somewhat as it will be for us, something new, grand, the reward and crown of all labors. For Him, the Son of man, the Ascension is a home-coming, a return to the Father, a taking possession of His Kingdom. For Him it signifies the fulfilment of all promises—must not Christ suffer and so enter into His glory?—infinite consolation and joy, transcending our powers of comprehension.

If we could image all the ecstasies and raptures of the Saints, all the bliss of the Blessed in Heaven, we would not even approach the boundless joy that enveloped Jesus at His entry into Heaven.

In this respect, too, Jesus is our exemplar, and His glory is a prototype and warrant of ours. For He wills that all who have followed Him faithfully and have lived and suffered for Him, shall share in His grandeur, His consolation, and His glory, and the more anyone has suffered and sacrificed, the more generous his participation in the glory of Christ (Eph. ii, 4 f.; Rom. viii, 17).

c) A reflection of this celebration in Heaven is found

in the festive observance of the liturgy and in the processions held on special occasions.

Brilliancy marked the processions in which the popes of the Middle Ages, surrounded by a magnificent entourage, took possession of their cathedral church, St. John Lateran.

The entry of a newly consecrated or newly appointed bishop into his cathedral, surrounded by rejoicing and singing multitudes, is glorious.

One must correctly understand this brilliant display in the life of the Catholic Church. Its purpose is to remind us of the glory of the heavenly Jerusalem and bring it closer to us. All these ceremonies and this unfolding of pomp are but a simile, an intimation of the liturgy of Heaven (Hebr. ix, 9), a dim copy of the enthronization of the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls (1 Pet. ii, 25).

VI. THE TWO ANGELIC MESSENGERS

"And while they were beholding Him going up to Heaven, behold two men stood by them in white garments; who also said: Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven? This Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, as you have seen Him going into heaven" (Acts, I, 10–11).

I. The Angels

The angels, who are never absent from a great divine mystery, do not appear here as tender youths, as at the

sepulchre of the Risen Savior, but as men, in conformity with the message they bear. Their garments are of gleaming white, symbolizing their spiritual nature.

The word of the Lord is fulfilled: "You shall see the heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man" (Jno. i, 51).

These angelic messengers are proof of the most delicate consideration on the part of the Master. They are to report that He has had a happy home-coming to the Father, that He has definitively passed into the unchanging life of eternity. They carry a final greeting, a last message.

II. Their Message

"Ye men of Galilee, why stand you. . . ."

The vision of the gloriously ascending Master has so enraptured the disciples that their eyes are still raised in rapture long after Jesus has disappeared.

How contemptible this earth appears when compared with a view of Heaven, even if but a few rays of glory dart across it. The disciples are seized with a holy longing. They fain would follow Him. What is the earth to them, now that He no longer dwells on it?

Angels come to turn their gaze back to earth. The disciples are not reproved for gazing after Jesus; they are admonished to collect their thoughts, to arrive at a decision and proceed to action.

The angels urge practical love. Why do you gaze after Him as though you would follow Him at once, as though the end of all things had come? No, your work is but beginning. Forward, to your task!

We probably have similar experiences at times. We have hours of consolation and long to linger with them.

But it is not the purpose of these hours of consolation, nor of daily Mass and Holy Communion, that we be carried away by them; they should rather impart new courage and strength to us to labor the more diligently and with greater zeal for God. Enduring rest in God will come later.

At the close of a retreat the wish to live on thus indefinitely, is quite apt to arise. But the order comes: Arise, go down into the lowlands of life! Your work begins, now show what you have gained!

The mystic life with its immersion of self in God and heavenly things cannot, by its very nature, be the object of life; it is a means of strengthening and equipping us better for the duties of this life. Thus it is that we find that the great mystics were at the same time very active. Think of the achievements of St. Teresa!

"*Quid statis aspicientes in caelum?*" Asceticism and mysticism should not lead to quietism, but qualify us for our vocational labors.

"He shall so come." Why this reference to Christ's final return? That the Apostles and disciples might join the thought of His coming for the judgment to their recollection of the Ascension and preach both together, in order that, if love for Him were not sufficiently strong to keep men in His grace, the fear of judgment would supplement their weakness.

The Ascension is, in a sense, the beginning of a new history of grace; the Saviour's return will mark the end.

The utterance of the angels may explain the eschatological conception prevalent in the early Church—the hope that the return of Christ would occur at an early date.

VII. THE RETURN TO JERUSALEM

"Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount that is called Olivet" (Acts i, 12).

"And they adoring went back into Jerusalem with great joy" (Luke xxiv, 52).

The last words of St. Luke's Gospel describe the mood dominating the disciples under the influence of the Ascension as one of reverence and joy.

I. Adoration

When the angels tell them their Master has entered into His glory, from which He shall return as Judge of the world, they cast themselves down in profoundest reverence and kiss the spot where last His feet had stood.

This was the first act of adoration of the invisible Saviour, which thenceforward was to be continued through all the centuries, before thousands and thousands of tabernacles.

Till then, too, partially accustomed to association with Christ's sacred humanity, the disciples had failed to rise to a complete realization of His Divinity. Now, however, after the tragedy of the Passion had ended so gloriously in the Resurrection and the Ascension,

His Divine Nature stands fully revealed, and as a consequence adoration is spontaneously given.

According to an old tradition, the Lord's footprints remained visible in the spot where He had last stood. The spot is still revered by pilgrims.

II. Joy and Consolation

"They went back with great joy." Although they returned without the beloved Master, they were nevertheless filled with joy.

They are happy for having gained a firm faith. The choicest effect of intensified faith is joy and comfort.

They rejoice over the miraculous exaltation of the Master, whose divine greatness they have viewed for the first time in its full brilliance; they rejoice in the assurance that He has attained His goal and is now with the Father. They rejoice over the promise of His glorious return, which they expected would occur soon.

Their confidence and hope in the spiritual riches that are to be theirs in the future is strengthened, the Lord's Ascension having given them safe guarantees thereof.

Now they understand His declaration: *"Vado ad Patrem"* in its full meaning. The promise: "I will come again and will take you to Myself; that where I am, you also may be" (Jno. xiv, 3) is given an utterly new import.

Love, too, has been mightily increased, love for Him who has been so kind and gentle to them and whom they now more than ever recognize as the sole worthy object of their affection.

Abundant consolation necessarily flows into their hearts from this increase of faith, hope, and charity.

In like manner the contemplation of this mystery may again and again fill the Christian with joy and consolation.

The Saviour went before to show us what awaits us after this life of toil—the fulfillment of all His promises. "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I shall go, and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and will take you to Myself, that where I am, you also may be" (Jno. xiv, 2–3).

Yes, O Lord, I also wish to be where Thou art, and because Thou art in Heaven, Heaven shall be the sole aim of my striving and longing.

And as often as I look at the skies, and as often as I see the stars gleaming in the firmament, I will raise up my eyes and my heart in the joyous thought: There is my Lord and Master; He is waiting to take me up into eternal glory when the hour comes. *"Sursum corda!"*

My heart's in Heaven;
Heaven's in my heart,
Earth's pain and sorrow
No longer smart.

IX. THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

I. CHRIST'S LAST MANDATE

"He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but should wait for the promise of the Father" (Acts i, 4).

"Stay you in the city, till you be endued with power from on high" (Luke xxiv, 49).

1. Every attentive reader of the Gospels must have remarked how frequently and impressively our Lord, towards the end of His life, referred the Apostles to the Holy Ghost as the One who was to complete the work He had begun. "And I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you forever, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, nor knoweth Him; but you shall know Him, because He shall abide with you, and shall be in you" (Jno. xiv, 16–17). And again: "But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you" (Jno. xiv, 26). "But when the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, He shall give testimony of Me" (Jno. xv, 26). "He shall not speak of Himself; but what things soever He shall hear, He shall speak; and the things

that are to come, He shall shew you. He shall glorify Me, because He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it to you" (Jno. xvi, 13 f.). "And I send the promise of My Father upon you" (Luke xxiv, 49).

2. Here we gaze deeply into the essence and operation of the Most Holy Trinity.

All three persons participate in the sanctification of the Apostles and the process of their inner perfectioning. The Father draws them to the Son, gives them to Him, keeps them in His love. The Son accepts them, separates them from the world, teaches them to know the Father and the Holy Ghost, introduces them to their vocation, and communicates to them His doctrine, His example, and His credentials. But the work is not yet completed. The Lord Himself says so: You cannot yet bear everything, you do not understand it fully; another must come and must complete what I have begun—the Holy Spirit.

3. But how are we to understand this? Had the Lord not done everything for them? Was he not a good Master?

Aye, the Master had taught them everything, but as it were from without, in human fashion, with human words and parables. The Spirit, however, will penetrate to the interior of their souls and there enkindle a fire.

He will be unto them a comforter after a new fashion, a teacher, light and strength, will lead them far beyond their present attainments, and will change them.

Therefore, they are to hope and confide, and prepare for His coming. That is the Master's last mandate.

A strange mystery this, which is repeated also in the lives of saints. All of them had their Pentecost, which brought them the great Light and translated them at one stroke into a higher order of grace. One need but think of Francis of Assisi in Portiuncula, Ignatius of Loyola in Manresa, etc.

Thus, too, the Spiritual Retreat and other pious occasions have become a feast of Pentecost for many a priest. *"Veni, Sancte Spiritus!"*

II. THE NOVENA FOR PENTECOST

(Acts I, 13 ff.)

1. This novena, ordered by the Lord Himself, is the oldest and most venerable, and the pattern of all later novenas.

Hence this religious practice observed in the Church dates back to its earliest days, even to Christ Himself. Its purpose is to obtain a special grace by joint, intensive prayer, or to prepare the soul for a particular solemnity.

2. The meeting-place is the upper room in the house of Mark on Sion, the same room in which the Last Supper and the manifestations of Christ to the Apostles occurred.

The participants. Besides the Eleven, "women" are expressly mentioned, *i. e.*, all those who are named in the narrative of the Passion and the mystery of the Resurrection; furthermore also "His brethren," hence near relatives of the Lord; and finally and specifically

"Mary, the Mother of Jesus." Since the Lord's departure she is especially dear to all of them as the one who had been closest to Him and retains so many sacred recollections of Him. The effects of the *"Ecce mater tua!"* are already noticeable in the Church of the Apostles.

3. Common prayer. "All these were persevering with one mind in prayer" (Acts i, 14). What is the nature of this first common prayer of the Christian Church?

a) It is performed in quiet seclusion, where the participants could recall and contemplate all the great events of the last three years, and everything the Divine Master had done and said before their eyes during these forty days, so full of grace.

As the Master Himself had prepared His public life by a Spiritual Retreat of forty days in silent solitude, so now the Apostles are to devote at least nine days preparing for the great baptism of the Spirit, which signifies for them the beginning of their mission out in the wide world.

Consider the propriety and necessity of a special preparation for the great days in the life of the priest —Holy Orders, jubilees, etc.

b) In intimate communion—*unanimiter*. They are one heart and one soul, united by the common love for Christ, warming and encouraging each other mutually like the coals in a furnace. In their case the word of the Lord is beautifully fulfilled: "Where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii, 20).

Devotions and exercises held in common are exceedingly valuable!

We have here the institution by Christ Himself of the devotion to the Holy Ghost. During the last days He had pointed again and again to the Holy Spirit, and now He Himself ordains the common preparation for the latter's coming. Hence it is that veneration of the Holy Ghost is prominent in the Church of the Apostles and is handed down as one of the faithfully treasured deposits of the faith.

c) In union with Mary, Mother of Jesus. What an influential element in pleading for the Holy Ghost is this union! How ardently the *"Veni, Sancte Spiritus!"* rose from the heart of Mary, who now prays as the advocate of the Church, which has become the special object of her love and solicitude!

How ardently the young candidate for the priesthood prays that the great day may be a true Pentecost for him; how his dear mother prays for him, that the Holy Spirit may come down upon her son with the fullness of His gifts!

d) Perseveringly—*perseveranter.* The Holy Spirit does not come immediately, but only after nine days. His coming must be obtained by enduring prayer, filled with longing. . . . They must learn that His coming is a great boon.

If anyone, therefore, would experience the Pentecostal miracle, he must plead for it perseveringly. Eight-day Retreats are more effective than three-day Retreats.

e) *"Expectarent promissionem."* As our Lord had probably intended, this expectation, directed wholly to

the Holy Ghost, withdrew their thoughts in part from Him, so that their grief at His departure was eased.

At the same time the novena has as one of its objects to teach the disciples to look upon the Holy Ghost as a separate Divine Person and to approach Him closely —an aim industriously pursued by the Lord during the last few weeks.

f) They prepare themselves in the consciousness and realization of their own weakness, which had been so flagrantly evident during the Passion. The Master, whose presence, word and example had hitherto strengthened and sustained them, is now no longer with them.

This consciousness of their own insufficiency was intended to increase their desire for strength from above, which Christ had promised them with such ample assurances of assistance, and which was to complete in them the work of the Master and supply His presence.

And so the *"Veni, Sancte Spiritus"* rises for the first time to Heaven with a fervor of devotion that has probably never been repeated. They plead: *"Per Dominum nostrum Iesum Christum."* Here, at least according to sense, this form and usage of praying in the name of Jesus probably originated, spontaneously, on the strength of the promise: "Amen, Amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you" (Jno. xvi, 23).

How careless, perhaps, is my preparation for Pentecost? Yet it should be a true joint experience. . . . And how necessary for me is a true Pentecost, a great

spiritual regeneration and rekindling of all good forces and faculties!

III. THE ELECTION OF MATTHIAS

I. The Time

"In those days Peter, rising in the midst of the brethren, said . . ." (Acts. i, 15). The election then took place during the novena in preparation for Pentecost. In this time of quiet recollection they were not merely to prepare their souls, but also to provide for the necessary supplementing of their forces, to fill the vacancy that had occurred in their ranks.

We also must examine our exterior conduct during the days of a Retreat, and change, supplement, improve what is defective.

During the forty days since the Resurrection the Master could readily have found a substitute for the unfortunate Judas. He did not do so, but left the selection and other matters to His vicar, St. Peter, and the College of the Apostles. From the very beginning expression is to be given to the fact that His power has been conferred upon them, and that it is to pass as a heritage from one generation of legitimate incumbents to another. This is the first official act of the Church of the Apostles.

II. The Procedure

The rôle played by Peter and the other Apostles is outlined clearly. It is Peter who presents the motion

for the election, specifies the conditions for eligibility, and directs everything.

He reports briefly, painfully affected, but without bitterness, on the miserable end of Judas. The word of the Psalmist must be fulfilled: *"Episcopatum eius accipiat alter"* (Ps. cviii, 8).

The College of the Apostles was a closed and complete unit. They had been chosen directly by the Lord Himself; they were a chosen multitude, which "the Father hath given Him" (Jno. xvii, 9, 11, 12, 24); He Himself had educated and trained them for their vocation as His messengers, witnesses, representatives and prepared them in a special manner ("To you is given . . ." "I no longer call you servants. . . ." "Whoever heareth you. . . ."). He had commended them to the Father's special protection. The forty days since His Resurrection He had devoted primarily to them.

By the defection of Judas a vacancy had arisen in this College. It was to be filled; the number twelve, ordained by the Lord, and remindful of the twelve tribes of Israel, was to be restored.

Peter determined the conditions for eligibility. In correspondence to the duty of an Apostle none may be chosen but a man who was a member of the community of Jesus and the twelve during the entire public life. No other man could be a witness to Christ, His life and His teachings, a bearer of the Apostolic tradition.

Hence the principal condition for the episcopal dignity is not a title of nobility, not a coat-of-arms, not wealth or prestige, but solely nearness to Jesus, the

qualification to be a witness for Christ and an exemplar of virtue for the flock. Ah, what misery came upon the Church when these principles of election were ignored!

The Apostles and disciples accept the words of Peter without contradiction. They obey him willingly, and thus complete unanimity reigns in the College of the Apostles.

Two disciples are nominated who have the qualifications designated by Peter: Barsabas and Matthias.

The choice proper is not made by vote, but by lot. As the Lord Himself selected the twelve from the body of the disciples, so also the choice of the substitute is to be left to Him. God is to reveal His will.

This practice of selection by lot is of Old Testament origin (Levit. xvi, 4; Num. xvii, 2; Jos. vii, 14; 1 Kings x, 20). The names were inscribed on tablets, which were placed in an urn; the urn was shaken until one lot came out.

Their intention to leave the choice to the Lord is clearly evidenced in the prayer recited before the meeting. It is the first prayer of the Church that has been handed down to us. "And praying they said: Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen to take the place of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas hath by transgression fallen, that he might go to his own place" (Acts i, 24–25).

"And they gave them lots, and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven Apostles" (*Ibid.*, 26).

III. Significance of the Election

The entire procedure is highly significant.

a) It shows above all a deep appreciation of the Apostolic office with respect to its origin and purpose. The vocation of the Apostle originates with the Lord Himself; the Apostle is Christ's appointed witness.

b) We note that from the very beginning the hierarchic order is clearly delineated. The episcopate as the continuation and heritage of the Apostles is of divine institution. Its consummation is to be achieved solemnly, under the invocation of the Holy Ghost.

c) Divine Providence is also discernible. If death or defection causes a vacancy in the Church or in an Order, God always provides for replacement by capable men. No one is indispensable.

IV. THE COMING OF THE SPIRIT

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts ii, 4).

I. Reasons for the Coming of the Spirit

He came down from above, *de caelo.*

In spite of the manner in which the world treated His Son, the Father nevertheless grants His petitions.

"Et ego rogabo Patrem et alium Paraclitum dabit vobis, ut maneat vobiscum in aeternum" (Jno. xiv, 16).

The Son desires to give to His own a proof of His

love and kindness. Scarce entered into His glory, He desires to send the best that Heaven contains, the *donum Dei,* the Holy Spirit, to His followers on earth. The Holy Ghost is to take His place as a comforter of His own (Jno. xiv, 16), a witness to the truth of the teaching of Christ (xv, 26), a judge of the world, in whose light all wickedness and untruth is unsparingly uncovered (Jno. xvi, 8). At His first manifestation to the assembled Apostles the Lord had imparted the Holy Ghost to the Eleven. "Receive ye the Holy Ghost . . ." But then His coming was invisible and confined to a specific purpose—the forgiveness of sins. Now they are to receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit for the benefit of the whole Church and the entire task of the Apostolate; the baptism of the Spirit, which is to warm their entire being and effect a great change, imparting strength, light, knowledge, and ardor. This fullness of the coming of the Spirit had been predicted by the prophets as a sign of the Messianic age (Ez. xxxvi, 25 ff.; Joel ii, 28).

After the Father had revealed Himself in a magnanimous manner to mankind in the creation and the functioning of Providence, and the Son in the Incarnation and Redemption, the Holy Ghost is now to appear in a mighty manifestation. As He showed Himself visibly at the beginning of the public life of Christ, so now also, at the inception of Christ's work, the Church—then indeed in the form of a dove, now in that of fiery tongues. He is to be the Regent of the last age.

Note the solemn baptism of the Church in the name of the Triune God!

II. Manner of Manifestation

(Acts ii, 2 ff.)

The disciples scarce had a correct conception of how the baptism of fire, this coming down of the Spirit, was to take place. But their expectations were probably not very moderate in view of the extraordinary things they had witnessed in conjunction with the Resurrection and Ascension. And now, on the feast of Pentecost, it occurred.

a) Very suddenly, *repente,* like all celestial revelations of grace in Holy Writ.

b) A mighty roar caused the multitude, who were assembled in large numbers for the harvest feast of thanksgiving, and the pilgrims who had come from all parts of the Jewish diaspora, to rush in amazement from all directions. This probably had been intended. The coming of the Holy Spirit was to take place in public before a large gathering, in opposition to former, individual outpourings.

The Spirit of God had previously come down upon individuals, upon the great men of the Old Testament, its leaders, prophets, and priests; He had illumined an Elizabeth and an Anna, a Zachary and a Simeon; wrought the mystery of the Incarnation, and led the Lord into the desert. But all of these were quiet, scat-

tered manifestations, unnoticeable, or only slightly noticeable, to outsiders. On Pentecost this is changed: all the people are to know that a new age has begun.

Something great is at issue; the Church of Christ is to be solemnly introduced into the Jewish world and to be impressed with the seal of divine power, with an exalted sign from above.

c) The Spirit descended in the shape of fiery tongues. What a wonderful sight that must have been —those little flames coming down from Heaven and, shaping themselves into tongues, settling above the heads of the disciples, visibly announcing that the Holy Ghost was enthroned above them and favored them with supernatural fire. Fire from Heaven, so frequently a punishment meted out by divine justice, here appears as a sign of supernatural grace, of heavenly light, of divine love.

Thus the Holy Ghost operates again and again in the Church—now in mysterious silence in manifestations affecting individuals, again as a mighty rain of grace on major occasions such as the conferring of the Sacrament of Confirmation, at jubilees, missions, councils.

III. The Effects

a) The Apostles receive the true baptism of the Spirit, which seizes, warms and transforms their entire being, making adepts of tyros, masters of semi-proficient pupils.

Now, of a sudden, everything they had hitherto grasped with difficulty, becomes clear to them. Dread of suffering becomes ardent love of the cross. Joyfully and fearlessly they enter into suffering and death. The Spirit of fortitude has made heroes of them.

The effect is particularly evident in the case of Peter. Filled with the Spirit of God, he makes his first public appearance as teacher and delivers his first sermon—the first allocution of the first Pope addressed to the world. All marvel and listen spell-bound. What power, what sparkling fire radiates from these words of Peter, who but a few weeks ago uttered the cowardly denial: "'I know him not"! What knowledge of the Scriptures, as though he had done naught else but study them during his whole life!

Whence this transformation? It came from above. *"Repleti sunt omnes Spiritu Sancto et coeperunt loqui."*

b) The effect of the revelation upon the multitude is tremendous. Naturally, scoffers were not altogether wanting; the great mass, however, was under the spell and the impression of having been made witnesses of an extraordinary divine manifestation. "And they were all astonished and wondered, saying one to another: What meaneth this?" (Acts ii, 12).

Immediately three thousand, probably all men, allowed themselves to be received into the kingdom of Christ. This was the first draught of fishes under the leadership of Peter.

Thus the Church promptly established a footing and

took shape in Jerusalem. The attitude of the people was favorable. The followers of Christ visited the Temple publicly and partook of the *agape* in the various homes.

c) The Holy Ghost now begins His operation in the Church. The prediction of the Prophet Joel (ii, 28) is being fulfilled: "I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams and your young men shall see visions."

The "coming of the Spirit," and a palpable coming at that, became a common possession of the primitive Church; it is part of the spiritual equipment of every Christian.

In those early days Confirmation was not a silently operating sacrament, but a coming of the Spirit, a baptism of fire, a palpable *tactus Dei*.

The Spirit of God supplies the impetus towards the mission among the heathen by leading Philip to the steward of the King of Ethiopia (Acts viii, 29), by enlightening Peter regarding the acceptance of Cornelius (x, 19), and by directing the steps of the Apostle of the Gentiles (xvi, 6).

Thus, in the Acts of the Apostles, we encounter again and again the workings of the Holy Ghost. One might conclude from all these passages that what nowadays is granted as an extraordinary gift and grace to a few select souls was at that time intended for the whole of Christendom. At all events, the first days of the youthful Church were veritable festive days of the Holy Ghost.

IV. Sinai and Pentecost

The feast of the seven weeks (*Pentecostes:* Deut. xvi, 9; Lev. xxiii, 16) was at the same time a memorial celebration recalling Sinai.

These two feasts, the old and the new Pentecost, aptly show the difference between the two Testaments.

On Sinai the Law was proclaimed amid thunder and lightning; here the Spirit of God appears amid the roaring of a mighty wind and in tongues of fire.

There the Law is graven on tablets of stone, here in the hearts and minds of men (Heb. x, 16).

Thus is the progressive revelation of God in the education of the human race evidenced.

V. The Pentecostal Church, Past and Present

Attempts have been made to justify later defections from the Church of Christ by declaring that the Catholic Church fell away from its original form.

True, the mustard seed developed into a tree, the small flock into a world empire, and therewith came many exterior changes. The human element in the Church is also subject to the changes brought on by time.

But what is essential has remained unaltered, as can readily be ascertained by a comparison of the Church of today with the Church of the Apostles, as we know it from the Acts and the Epistles.

Peter stands at the head of the others vested with full authority, just as his successor, the pope, stands today. We find a hierarchy, composed of bishops,

priests, and deacons. We note that the same Sacraments are dispensed. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, holds a position of honor. Virginity is a state of life. There are religious congregations, charitable activities, collections for sacrificial purposes, divine services in common, missionaries sent among pagans, councils delivering decisions in the name of the Holy Ghost, excommunications and condemnations of heresies, prohibition of books, etc.

V. THE CONTINUED OPERATION OF THE HOLY GHOST

I. Manner of Operation

a) By the sending of the Holy Spirit the revelation of the Triune God was completed: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost had successively manifested themselves to mankind. And this is the characteristic difference between the Christian Church on the one hand, and the Jewish Synagogue and Islam on the other.

b) Not until the coming of the Holy Spirit and His operation is a more profound conception of the supernatural life transmitted. The outpouring of the Holy Ghost, *i. e.*, the immediate imparting of the Deity, constitutes the foundation and prerequisite of a new supernatural life.

Pentecost is the true hour of the Church's birth. The thought of the earthly kingdom of the Messias vanishes and yields to the idea of the Christian world-Church with its out-and-out supernatural character, directed towards spiritual transformation.

c) "He will teach you all things and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I have said to you" (Jno. xiv, 26).

Jesus continues to work through His teaching, His example, His Eucharistic grace; the actual teacher, however, is the Holy Ghost. It is He who imparts marvelously profound thoughts to the great teachers, thoughts that prove themselves forever fruitful; He protects the Church from error; He presides at the ecumenical councils.

Primarily He makes possible a more profound understanding, a firmer grasp of Holy Scripture, by permitting its immeasurable treasures of light and comfort to be seized and enjoyed in a manner such as no exegetic science can command. What is meditation? For one, it is a mere study, a practice in exegesis; for another, an interior grasping and enjoying of the innermost kernel under the guidance and direction of the Holy Ghost.

d) He was promised particularly as a comforter. How effectively He has filled this rôle! What happiness, what bliss reigns in the hearts of the Saints, increasing even to blessed ecstasy! What comfort in the houses of worship of the true Church of Christ, in her confessionals, her quiet chapels, on her feast-days! How this comfort appears in her hymns and sacred chants! How it glistens and gleams like gold from her ceremonies and liturgical observances! A marvelous spiritual sunlight floods everything. *"Consolator optime, dulcis hospes animae, dulce refrigerium!"*

You also have experience, you know what spiritual consolation is! You have tasted of it in the most sacred hours of your life, at your first Holy Communion, your investiture, your ordination, and frequently in quiet hours.

Oh, do not repel this comforter! Nothing can replace His consolation. When He is absent, your heart is dark and empty.

II. Diversity of Operation

a) *"Repleti sunt omnes"* we read of the first Pentecostal congregation. But the workings of the Spirit were quite different, according to individual receptivity. To whom was the Holy Ghost imparted on that occasion? To uneducated fishermen, simply and uprightly humble, not to the proud scribes and to rich, luxurious men of the world. And so it has ever remained.

b) What a difference between soul and soul!

Both possess objectively the same faith, the same truths. Yet how different their influence on life and frame of mind!

Both believe in judgment and eternal retribution. The thought affects the one like the roaring of a storm and the blaze of fire; the other it leaves cold and unaffected, except as by a scientific problem.

Both know that sin is the greatest and the sole evil. This recognition produces purity of heart in the one; in the heart of the other, in spite of this recognition, the old lukewarmness, half-heartedness, sinfulness endure.

Both believe in the presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. But what a difference in their reverence, love, longing! What a disparity in their visits to the Blessed Sacrament, at Mass, at Holy Communion!

Both celebrate Pentecost. To the one it is a soul-experience replete with light, fire, and consolation; to the other it is merely a holyday with sermon and High Mass.

What a disparity, too, between the souls of two priests! In the eyes of the one his vocation looms as exalted, noble, and pure as a mountain landscape, in which peak after peak raises a mighty finger to the skies; to the other it is as a terribly prosaic prairie.

The one group are supernatural men, to whom the spiritual, the divine, the eternal is as real as, yea a greater reality than, air, water, or rain. The others, thoroughly naturalistic and materialistically minded, merely reckon with the eternal, the spiritual, the divine as with a disturbing problem which unfortunately exists and, since it represents the philosophy of life of a part of mankind, cannot well be ignored. But they have wrestled with it in a scientific manner and have obtained a soothing prescription from great minds.

Whence this difference?

The soul has experienced its feast of Pentecost, which brought to it the great Light that cannot be extinguished. *"Repleti sunt."* The Holy Ghost has awakened what is divine in human nature, has liberated it, and it rises, strong with the vigor of life; it has, as it were, entered into the blood, as a new principle of life; a new creature comes into being.

Many fall short of this development. They have never had the true Pentecostal experience, have never heard the rushing of the wind, have never seen the tongues of fire.

Why not? Did they await the promise of the Lord in zealous preparation, in quiet prayer, in union with Mary, the Mother of Jesus? *"Veni, Sancte Spiritus!"*

c) Freedom of Operation.

"Spiritus, ubi vult, spirat" (Jno. iii, 8). The working of the Holy Ghost is voluntary. He works when, how, and where He wills; for those who pray for His working, but often also for those who do not pray—aye, even give no thought thereto; for the worthy and the unworthy. Nevertheless a certain mutually reflex action, albeit mysterious, exists between grace and the human soul, the workings of the Spirit and the will of man.

It is impossible to set up a formula governing these relations. But so much is certain: God remains free and unfettered. We have absolutely no control over His grace, light, and consolation. *"Spiritus, ubi vult, spirat!"*

VI. CHURCH AND SYNAGOGUE

"And they were always in the Temple, praising and blessing God" (Luke xxiv, 53).

"And continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they took their meat with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the

Lord increased daily together such as should be saved" (Acts ii, 46–47).

I. Connection

a) The teachings imparted by the Master to the disciples after the Resurrection contained an instruction concerning the relations between the Old and the New Covenant. Even in the Sermon on the Mount, delivered early in His public life, He had solemnly declared: "Do not think that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matt. v, 17). After His Resurrection He points again specifically to this statement: "And He said to them: These are the words that I spoke to you while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled which are written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me" (Luke xxiv, 44).

The New Covenant, therefore, according to the teaching of the Saviour Himself, is naught but the fulfilment, a ripe fruit of the Old Covenant.

b) Christ had indeed inveighed against the practices and influence of the Pharisees and the grievous abuses committed in the Temple and by the Sanhedrin; had emphasized forcefully the original sense of the Law as willed by God against arbitrary human decrees and human interpretations; and thereby He had aroused keen opposition to the council, but not to the Law and the ancient divine order. Not an iota is to be changed in the Law. Even in the new kingdom of God the Old

Covenant is to be preserved unabridged as to its divine content of truth, though steeped in a new light and deepened in significance.

II. Opposition

a) What was not in conformity with the Church of Christ and necessarily had to be eliminated in the Old Covenant were the symbolic elements and features, which were replaced by the reality, the fulfilment. *"Umbram fugat veritas."*

The ancient sacrificial and ceremonial services had fulfilled their purpose of prefiguring what was to come. Animal sacrifices were to be replaced by the exalted, pure sacrifice (Malachias) of the New Covenant; circumcision by Baptism; the national Church by the World-Church. In consequence the Temple at Jerusalem must forfeit its unique position.

b) The chief object, however, was to bring about a spiritual transformation by means of the doctrine of Christ, His law of love and of the inner life, under the meek and vigorous operation of the Holy Ghost.

c) Yet all this did not produce a real opposition between Judaism and Christianity. This opposition arose from the fact that the majority of the Jews, confused by their spiritual leaders, did not recognize Jesus as the Messias, and, as a result, failed to participate in the logical development, remained where they were, and refused to emerge from their narrow national shell.

The rupture, however, was not to be brought about suddenly, for the fundamental elements of the new

Church lay on Israel's knees. The decisive rupture did not take place until the destruction of Jerusalem.

III. Conduct of the Church of the Apostles

a) For the nonce, the Apostles remained in union with the ancient Israelitic Church, visited the hall of the Last Supper and the Temple, and recited the accustomed prayers.

The Temple, the ancient divine services, and the Law remained dear and sacred to them. They felt and acknowledged themselves as Jews—as sons of their people, refusing to segregate themselves in any manner.

Jesus Himself had assigned Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria to the Apostles as their first field of labor, and the great outside world as the second. As a result, the Apostles in the beginning retained a goodly measure of particularism. Even when they went beyond the borders of Palestine, they turned first to the Jewish congregations of the diaspora, preached in the synagogues, and proclaimed therein the message of joy (*"testificans Judaeis atque gentilibus;"* Acts xx, 21). Their letters, too, with the exception of those of St. John, show a Jewish coloring.

b) Under the guidance of the Holy Ghost the pure Christian spirit constantly waxed stronger until, prompted by the action of St. Paul, the Council of the Apostles in Jerusalem rendered its first decision: "It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay no further burden upon you. . . ." (Acts xv, 28).

c) In course of time the victory of Christian uni-

versalism over Jewish particularism became more and more evident. But the Church adhered with equal determination to reverence for the Old Covenant and the Law. Marcion's endeavor to separate the two revelations was rejected, and to this day the Psalms and Lessons of the Old Testament re-echo in the liturgy of the Church.

Is it possible that the time will soon come when the Holy Ghost will remove the bandage from the eyes of the Jews? The Church has never ceased praying for these blind people, and her priests will do well to give heed to movements towards conversion, which are becoming more noticeable in these latter days, and to promote them at least by their prayers.

Just as it is an aberration to endeavor to reduce the richly developed forms of divine service to the status of the primitive Church, just so the Church authorities rightly seek to ward off the danger of the Christian heritage being burdened with Old Testament observances in the interest of the movement for the conversion of the Jews.

X. CHRIST'S LIFE IN HIS CHURCH

I. "SEDET AD DEXTERAM DEI"

I. The Fact

THAT Christ lives on in Heaven, sitting "on the right hand of God," is witnessed in all the creeds (*Apostolicum, Nicaenum, Athanasianum,* etc.). This faith is founded on the clear text of Holy Writ. Thus St. Mark says: "And the Lord Jesus was . . . taken up into Heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God" (xvi, 19). St. Paul frequently makes use of this expression in his letters. Thus he writes the Hebrews, regarding Christ, that He "sitteth on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He hath inherited a more excellent name than they" (i, 3; cfr. viii, 1; Rom. viii, 34; Eph. i, 20). Similarly St. Peter, speaking of Christ, declares: "Who is on the right hand of God . . . the angels and powers and virtues being made subject to Him" (1 Pet. iii, 22).

II. Its Significance

The words very aptly express the undisturbed, serene, eternal possession of heavenly glory. This throne shall never be overthrown. And this dominion con-

sists in participation in the power and dominion of God. There is no doubt that this is said of the humanity of Christ. There is no need of saying that He is in full possession of the divine power and dominion according to His Divinity: but that He was exalted to such heights also as man, transcends all thought and expectation.

Also as man, therefore, Christ is *Rex gloriae,* King of glory, Ruler over all who are in Heaven, on earth, and under the earth. (Phil. ii, 10).

As the bishop at solemn services is seated on a richly decorated throne, vested with the insignia of his exalted office, so the Eternal High Priest, the "Shepherd and Bishop of our souls" (1 Pet. ii, 25), is enthroned in a blaze of glory in the heavenly cathedral.

But the bishop may not sit alone on his throne. He must be attended by his assistants; the chancel stalls must be filled by dignitaries and the pews of the mighty nave by the faithful populace—the greater their number, the better—all united in the same festive joy.

So, too, the heavenly cathedral must not remain empty. For Jesus went to His Father to prepare a dwelling-place for us (Jno. xiv, 2). New hosts of pilgrims constantly stream into the cathedral and are led to the throne of Christ, where they fall down in adoration, seeking beatitude. And He, as Lord of the Heavenly Home, assigns to them their places of honor, the places once occupied by the fallen angels. One is assigned to the place of an archangel; another to that of a Seraph; yet others are given seats of honor among the patriarchs, prophets, confessors, etc. Some,

like St. John the Baptist and St. Joseph, occupy special thrones.

And the multitude increases constantly; they come from all countries, until the number shall be filled.

Will you be assigned to a place there too—and how close to the Master?

III. Our Advocate with the Father

The King of Heaven does not rest content with assigning our places to us when we appear before His throne. He also assists us from Heaven to reach them. "Whereby He is able also to save forever them that come to God by Him; always living to make intercession for us—*semper vivens ad interpellandum pro nobis*" (Heb. vii, 25). Even if we have the misfortune to sin, we need not despair: "But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Just" (1 Jno. ii, 1). Therefore St. Paul exhorts us: *"Adeamus ergo cum fiducia ad thronum gratiae, ut misericordiam consequamur et gratiam inveniamus in auxilio opportuno"* (Heb. iv, 16).

The Church knows this full well and therefore regularly concludes her prayers with the formula: *"Per Christum Dominum nostrum"!*

This fact alone shows the injustice of the charge advanced against the Church that she replaces Christ with Mary, designating her as mediatrix. No: Mary is but the first step of the *scala sancta. "Per Mariam ad Jesum, per Jesum ad Patrem."* (Read the triple colloquy in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.)

II. "I AM WITH YOU!"

"I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. xxviii, 20).

This is the dearest, sweetest, most welcome assurance that the Lord could have given His Apostles and disciples at parting. Each word is of deep significance.

I. Content and Import of the Promise

a) The Lord by saying, "I am with you," does not merely mean that the historic memory of His presence on earth would remain and continue to exert an influence, as some Protestants construe these words. That was self-understood. Nor does Christ designate by this sentence merely a presence through grace in the execution of the mission mandate. He had promised them this grace at an earlier date. "I will ask the Father and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you forever" (Jno. xiv, 16; xvi, 7 ff.).

b) Something else is meant here. "I am with you," the Saviour says. Evidently the disciples, however comforting His promise of the Consoler-Spirit, would above all miss Him who had been their Master, their Teacher, their All. Comforting them, He assures them that He will remain with them. This must signify a special, actual presence, and it can only be His Eucharistic presence. For He says: "Do this in commemoration of Me!" When they do it, He is present—actually, personally, present: "This is My Body." Hence they

have the power of making His continued presence an actuality in the fullest sense of the word.

c) For Protestants this "I am with you" signifies little, for us infinitely much. Step into a Protestant church, and you will find there prayer and song addressed to Our Lord Jesus Christ, possibly in beautiful and devout forms, but there is lacking the sacrificial altar. The pulpit is the principal object. The priest has become a "servant of the Word."

Enter a Catholic church during Holy Mass, at the elevation, or at benediction, or during the Forty Hours' Adoration! The living tangible center of everything is Jesus, really and truly present and not merely an intellectual memory. All this adoration, these genuflections, the private and common prayer and singing, the incense, the gleam of candle-light, are in His honor. The Lord in the tabernacle, in the monstrance, like a warm, radiant sun, is the source of all life. The entire congregation bows in reverence and confidence.

II. Motive and Purpose of the Promise

a) Jesus wished His followers to be comforted because of His departure. They knew from bitter experience what separation from Him implied. His reappearance had indeed raised them up again, but their joy was diminished by the fact that He showed Himself only from time to time, remaining invisible between these occasions. What if He should disappear altogether? Like a soothing balm the promise: "I am

with you *all* days even to the consummation . . ." is applied to their aching hearts. Even though they failed to understand the manner of this presence, the assurance comforted them.

b) He wished to instil courage into His Apostles and disciples for their task of converting the world. They may well have been grievously perplexed as to their mission. Of course, if He accompanied them, if He were present as their Commander and Leader, all would be well; but to undertake the task alone, without Him —how shall they manage?

Into this quandary comes encouragement through the words: "Fear not, I shall be present; I shall be with you, whithersoever you may go. And if bodily eyes do not see me, I shall always be near you as an aid, a Comforter, a Counsellor, in all situations and dangers. Leave the manner and method to Me!" He had fulfilled His promises concerning the Resurrection with marvelous fidelity and in a manner surpassing all expectations; and they felt this promise, too, would be fulfilled.

How comforting for soldiers of Christ to know their beloved General is near! How encouraging the thought that His eye sees, His ear hears them, that He can be approached at any moment for counsel, comfort, and instruction!

III. Effect of the Promise

a) Even the mere presence of the Lord is of inestimable value for His followers. We know that

wherever the light of the sanctuary lamp flickers, He is truly, really, and substantially present, with His Divinity and Humanity, under the modest form of bread; the self-same Saviour who walked in the Holy Land, teaching and working miracles; the self-same Saviour who is gloriously risen, ascended into Heaven, and now sitteth at the right hand of the Father. There He is, a few steps away; there He awaits us, prepared to hear us, to solve our doubts, to advise us, to console and strengthen us.

b) But the Lord was not content even with such generosity. He wished to offer Himself for us again and ever again as a sacrifice, to renew His bloody sacrifice on the cross in an unbloody manner. What an infinitely valuable sacrificial offering He has placed in our hands! Ah, the aid priest and people may obtain day by day from the Heavenly Father in their afflictions! It is significant that precisely here, at the Holy Sacrifice, mutual good will is voiced so frequently—*"Dominus vobiscum—Et cum spiritu tuo!"*

c) And in order to make this presence altogether intimate, He wills to unite Himself with His followers as food and drink, to nourish them with His flesh and blood.

Thus Christ, with His loving presence, is the center of the entire divine service. And He is so not in a monotonous, uniform manner, but in the richest variety of ways, inasmuch as in the course of the ecclesiastical year the entire life of the Savour is portrayed to us, from His birth in the stable at Bethlehem to His Ascension with its glorious teachings and miracles.

IV. Length of Time

"All days even to the consummation of the world."

a) This proves:

1. that His words are not merely addressed to the Eleven, but also to their successors, hence that there is a rightful continuance of office;

2. that, in spite of all persecutions, the Church will continue to exist until the end;

3. that the Church will not fail in her essential task of teaching and guiding men; that, therefore, she cannot err and lead men astray.

b) As a matter of fact, Christ was with His Church at all times—in the primitive days, in the days of the catacombs, through the Middle Ages, and in modern times.

A marvelous picture, this nearness and operation of the Lord through the centuries, in ever new forms, expressions, devotions.

c) What a wonderful effect the vivid, constant, conscious conviction of the nearness of Christ must exert upon the pious priest:—the thought that his Master observes sympathetically, with eye and heart, from the tabernacle, all the labors, sufferings, and sacrifices he takes upon himself in the Master's service!

This vivid *mecum* is a glorious thing in the life of the priest. Without it, his days would be sunless.

But what a difference between one priest and another! How different their relation to the tabernacle! The Master is so near to the one, so distant from the other. Objectively, indeed, He is present to all in the

Eucharist, but the inner perception of His presence and its significance is so different.

It was thus also during His earthly life. He was near to all, yet of all the thousands only a few had intimate personal contact with Him.

III. THE VICTORIOUS CHURCH

"I am with *you!*" The Lord did not will to continue His living presence on earth merely for His own sake; He would be with His own and present in the work He had created. Great men exert an influence far beyond the grave by their works. The Saviour has established a world-embracing work, His Holy Church, and He wills to be in and with this Church unto the end of time. And since He Himself achieved a glorious victory over all things, so His foundation shall be victorious from the beginning unto the end. "*Confidite, ego vici mundum*" (Jno. xvi, 33).

I. The Church's Triumph Over her Enemies

"Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi, 18). Nineteen centuries have passed and the work of Christ has outlasted them, in spite of many attacks and persecutions.

a) Brute force arose against the young Church, set in motion first by the Jews in Jerusalem, then by the Jews in all the countries into which the Apostles carried the Gospel. Their malice failed of its purpose

against the foundation of Christ: *"non praevalebunt!"*

The Roman Cæsars, the mighty rulers of the world, arose against the Church and sought to exterminate it with torture and death. But in vain! The Cæsars died, the imperial power vanished, the entire Roman Empire fell; but the kingdom of Christ flourished ever more vigorously: *"non praevalebunt!"*

b) Infidel philosophy took up the struggle, employing all intellectual resources to hold up the new teaching to ridicule—but in vain. One system failed after the other, but the wisdom of Christ endured: *"non praevalebunt!"*

c) Enemies arose within the ranks of the Church, heretics who strove to undermine the truth with all the forces of eloquence and seduction: *"non praevalebunt!"*

And these enemies entered the field again and again, after periods of respite; they attacked singly and with united forces, like wild-rushing ocean waves—but in vain: *"non praevalebunt!"*

Unto this day the sign of the cross victoriously dominates the battlefield.

II. The Church's Triumph in her Activities

Christ's Holy Church has not only remained victorious over all attacking forces, but has also developed a victorious activity at all times.

a) The grain of mustard seed (Matt. xiii, 31) has grown into a mighty tree, extending its boughs over all countries, affording refreshing shade to all. Go

where you will, you will find the Catholic Church; Christ's doctrine is taught and professed everywhere; not in one form in one place, and in another somewhere else; no, it is always the same teaching, as the Church has preserved it unadulterated from the time of the Apostles.

b) Moreover, the Church has not only prevailed everywhere, she has not only conquered all the continents; she is also "the leaven, which leaveneth the whole" (Matt. xiii, 33).

The Church has cleansed and sanctified the pagan world with her sublime teaching; in the Middle Ages she sublimated and illumined everything; and in our days she again and again dispels the dense darkness of infidelity and vice in pagan lands.

Can anyone describe the achievements of the Church not only for the supernatural, but also for the natural life? What is the significance of her labors for society, for civilization and culture, for art and science?

Who is it that at all times espoused the cause of the poor, the oppressed, the weak? Who founded the first hospitals? Who established the first schools and universities? Who provided the arts, architecture, painting, sculpture, poetry, music with the most sublime material, incentive and support? Who preserved the works of antiquity, and created the most noble, imperishable works of art and science? Were they not children of the Church? Look up statistical records! Where is opposition to suicide, race sucide, immorality, crime, political, economic, social upheaval most vigorous?

Has not the Church's slogan always been: *Omnia instaurare in Christo"* (Eph. i, 10)?

III. An Objection

a) I concede, replies a pessimist, that the Catholic Church is endowed with truly divine power; she possesses the means with which she is still able to achieve great victories. But what of her actual status among us, today, in our own country? Is it not a fact that avarice and shamelessness and pleasure-seeking have grown to frightful proportions?

b) All the terrible things you see cannot lessen the victorious character of the Church.

Why? (α) You are looking at but a small section; you are judging from one angle, with an eye to local conditions. If you surveyed the whole, you would see the bright light beside the shadows; the light which in many places is virtually lost in the shadow, but shines more expansively and brilliantly elsewhere; if you saw it you would change your mind. (β) You must remember that human freedom is not displaced by the victorious activity of the Church. Man may disdain to attach himself to a victorious cause, he may abuse the influence he exerts over others to ruin them. That may occur in isolated instances; it may also take on the character of an epidemic, spreading over long periods and entire countries. (γ) You must not forget that your country, even the Continent on which you live, is but a small part of the world—and of the Church; that if a corrupted human will puts obstacles in the way

of the victorious activity of the Church in one place, it can and will reveal itself more brightly somewhere else.

We are quite prone to halt at individual stages, individual developments of the great struggle, and to permit them to depress and discourage us. No! Emphatically no! Christ conquers and advances in spite of everything. He does not measure the progress of His kingdom by individuals, nor by scattered groups or countries, nor by years and decades. The units of His computation are the whole of humanity, centuries, the whole world and all time.

And has not the kingdom of Christ, as a whole, intrinsically and extrinsically, constantly and progressively advanced? Where is there a realm that could be compared with it?

Therefore, O soldier of Christ, do not lose courage! The greater the number of enemies, the more serious the dangers threatening your flock, the more valiantly you must fight. Strive to save at least what can be saved!

Carry on! Serve a victorious Lord. He Himself is victorious, His cause, too, is victorious; and all who trust Him and remain faithful to Him will be victorious. Long live Christ the King!

IV. CHRIST'S RETURN

Our Lord is incessantly active in behalf of mankind, in order that as many as possible may, with the aid of His grace, attain to eternal salvation. In Heaven He labors as an advocate with the Father, on earth by His

Church, whose soul is the Holy Spirit, sent by Him, and with whom He remains for all time with His power and grace and His Eucharistic presence.

But when the moment designated by Providence shall come, when the number of the elect, who are to people the heavens, shall be filled, then He will arise from His throne to return in visible human form to judge the world.

Again and yet again the Master pointed to His return at the end of time. It was the burden of the last words He addressed to His enemies, when, blinded by hatred, Caiphas adjured Him to give testimony to Himself: "Nevertheless I say to you: Hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of Heaven" (Matt. xxvi, 64). And it was the final greeting which He caused the celestial messengers to convey to the disciples after His Ascension: "This Jesus, who is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come as you have seen Him going into Heaven" (Acts i, 11).

How will He return?

I. The Announcement

a) Mighty blasts of trumpets, following upon the horrors of the last days, will strike ear and heart of the living and the dead and like a flash of lightning disclose the fact that the great day of reckoning has arrived. The call will resound throughout all creation: *Venite ad judicium!*

Wondrous sound the trumpet flingeth,
Through earth's sepulchres it ringeth,
All before the throne it bringeth.

One vast scream of fear and horror will fill the air. The fright caused by a mighty hurricane, a dreadful storm, the rolling of thunder, the howling of tempestuous winds—the fear which causes all nature to tremble—all this is but a dim presentiment of that hour.

Death is struck, and nature quaking,
All creation is awaking,
To its Judge an answer making.

b) In a moment all the billions of men of all times and places will be present in one spot.

What a sight—this multitude without number, trembling, excited with fear—men of all colors, of all tribes, from every zone, of all times, classes, ages, of all races, religions, and cultures. A scene so gigantic, so overwhelming, that no brush can limn it, no pen describe it. . . .

c) The final great act of the history of the world has come: the general judgment!

The stage is the somber black arch of the sky, no longer brightened by a single star, no longer illumined by sun or moon: *"Sol obscurabitur et luna non dabit lumen suum et stellae cadent de caelo"* (Matt. xxiv, 29).

d) Everyone clearly realizes that the last day has dawned, the day of judgment of the world. The final great decision is to be made.

Ha! the feelings and emotions of the wicked! Now

all doubt ceases, all scoffing is silenced. Now the terrible truth arises in gigantic hideousness: *"Erravimus . . ."*

Ye mountains, fall upon us!

But there is no escape, no possibility of concealment, no salvation!

II. The Arrival of the Great Judge

A flash of lightning, more frightful than any that men have witnessed, tears the dark curtain asunder . . . A tremor seizes everyone—the Judge appears!

a) His insignia are borne before Him. *"Parebit signum Filii hominis in caelo"* (Matt. xxiv, 30). High in the heavens it gleams, visible from afar, flooding the scene with the brightness of day, lofty and majestic, dreadfully somber and plain.

"Ave spes nostra unica!" the just whisper.

"Woe unto us! The Nazarene has conquered!" The godless cry in despair. . . . Ha! The sign which they have reviled, cursed, ridiculed, scorned—the cross of Golgotha, becomes the sign of the Judge of the world.

b) Christ appears, surrounded by His angels and the Blessed of Heaven, in terrible majesty and glory!

Even when He came as a child, His coming was glorified by the rays of Divinity: the angels and the star. And Herod was stricken by fear and all Jerusalem with him. When the henchmen of Pilate and the chief priests took Him captive in the Garden of Olives, a word, a glance sufficed to hurl the entire mob to the earth. When He died on the cross, the sun was dark-

ened, the foundations of the earth were shaken, the mountains burst asunder, the people trembled. . . .

Now He comes clothed with full power and glory, as He had foretold: *"Videbunt Filium hominis venientem in nubibus caeli cum virtute multa et majestate"* (Matt. xxiv, 30).

When He appeared to His Apostles after His Resurrection, and suddenly stood before them, they were stricken with fear, although He manifested Himself in love and kindness. How the world will quake with fear when it sees Him now, *"cum virtute multa et majestate!"*

c) Here He comes, the *"desideratus cunctis gentibus"* (Agg. ii, 8), the Messias, the pivotal figure in the history of the world, about whom the intellectual battle has raged for thousands of years, the Teacher of the world, the Redeemer, the King and General, the Head of the Church, the Judge of the world. . . .

In marvelous grandeur, dignity, majesty, seated on the throne of glory, surrounded by a brilliant entourage, the numbers of which the eye cannot encompass.

All eyes, fascinated, are compelled to gaze upon this picture—some transfigured, the others full of terror.

d) As Joseph stood before his brethren in Egypt, so Christ now appears and manifests Himself before the whole of mankind.

"Ego sum Jesus, frater vester"—in whom you hoped, for whom you suffered and fought, whose day you awaited and longed for, to whom you cried with the cry of longing: *"Veni, Domine Jesu!"* (Apoc. xxii, 20). Now your longing is stilled—*Ecce Rex vester!*

Ego sum Jesus, quem vos vendidistis. I am Jesus, whom you have rejected, crucified, persecuted, reviled, betrayed, in His own Person, in His Church, in His servants, in His teachings, in His sacraments, whom you sought to cast out of the world and out of the hearts of the people.

He stands before you! *Ego sum!* Do you know Me? *Ego lux mundi, via, veritas et vita!* You have asked, *Quid est veritas?* I have told you what is truth, I have warned you, I have been patient, I have waited—pointing to this day! Now this day has arrived!

I have bled for all of you; behold the marks of the wounds in My hands and feet; gaze upon the wound in My side! *Videte, in quem transfixistis!* (cfr. John xix, 37).

III. The Last Judgment

a) In one terrible moment everything will become clear and evident—the entire history of the world and everyone's particular history will lie open as a book. As a flash of lightning in the dark night sheds a dazzling light round about, so now all things are disclosed and made evident. God's government of the world is shown to be justified in affairs great and small. All seals are broken, all archives are thrown open, all secrets are revealed, all mysteries are solved; all guilt and all merit, sin and virtue are sharply separated and measured, counted, weighed. Every man stands there as he was in reality, as he is in the eyes of God—exposed, unmasked. Even in exterior form the brilliant

beauty of grace here; the hideous ugliness of sin there! A mighty sigh shakes the multitude: Yea—so it is!

Each is signed on the forehead with the sign of election (*decem milia signati*) or of rejection.

All is clear, so overwhelmingly just, that no single word of contradiction is heard from the innumerable multitude.

b) The eternal division is executed in a moment by angels. A signal, and the sheep are separated from the goats—to the right and to the left of the enthroned Judge. Wheat and chaff are flung apart at one cast—an irrevocable, eternal division and separation!

From the one side rises a tremendous groan of despair, shaking the shuddering world; from the other the Alleluia of those who are saved rises in unspeakable joy.

Where will *you* stand? Among the sheep or among the goats? Where will your lot be cast for all eternity—with the saints or the damned? Ask yourself with whom you are walking *now*, to whom you are *now* attached!

c) And now all light is focused on the Judge. He has arisen from the judgment-seat. His figure is gigantic and majestic. He turns to the right, to the just. His eyes begin to glow with infinite love. He opens His arms wide, and sweet as the pealing of holiday bells His voice is heard: *"Venite, benedicti Patris mei! . . ."* (Matt. xxv, 34).

Then He faces those on the left. Terrible anger clouds His brow, a gleam like unto a bright sword flashes from His mouth, His eyes emit blazing fire,

His arm is raised menacingly, and His voice crashes like the thunder which, instantly following the lightning, rends the clouds, shakes the vaults of heaven, causes the world to tremble: *"Discedite a me, maledicti . . ."* (Matt. xxv, 41). And as a mighty tree, struck by glaring lightning, crashes, splintered and dead, the entire multitude of the damned collapses—*massa damnata. . . .*

d) The sentence is followed immediately by its execution: *"Et ibunt hi in supplicium aeternum, justi autem in vitam aeternam"* (Matt. xxv, 46). There is a suddenly rising and never ending cry of despair—the abyss is opened and greedily swallows the damned. . . . And an angel seals its black maw and affixes the inscription: *Tempus non est amplius!* Here, the victorious army gather about their Eternal King and High-Priest for their entry into the Heavenly City—rejoicing, in unspeakable gratitude, sure of eternal beatitude.

That is the finale of the great drama of mankind. The curtain falls, time ends, eternity begins:

Mors aut vita aeterna.

. . . . . .

Recordare, Jesu pie,
Quod sum causa tuae viae,
Ne me perdas illa die!

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